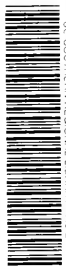


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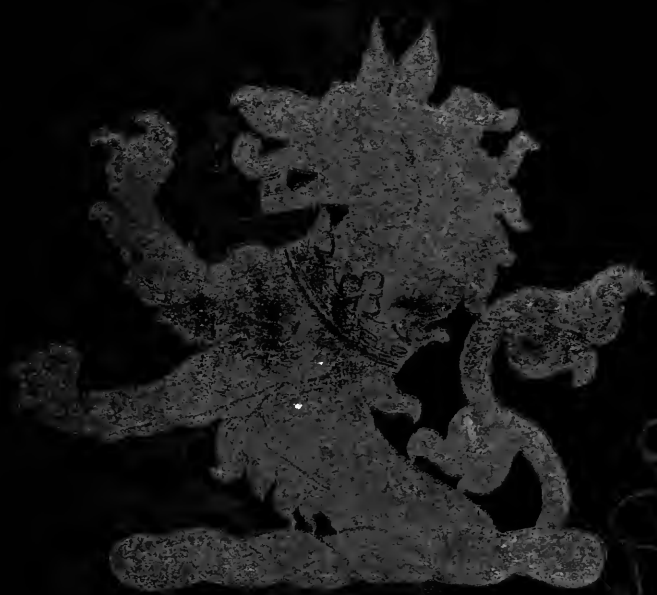


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THE WALLS OF JERICO

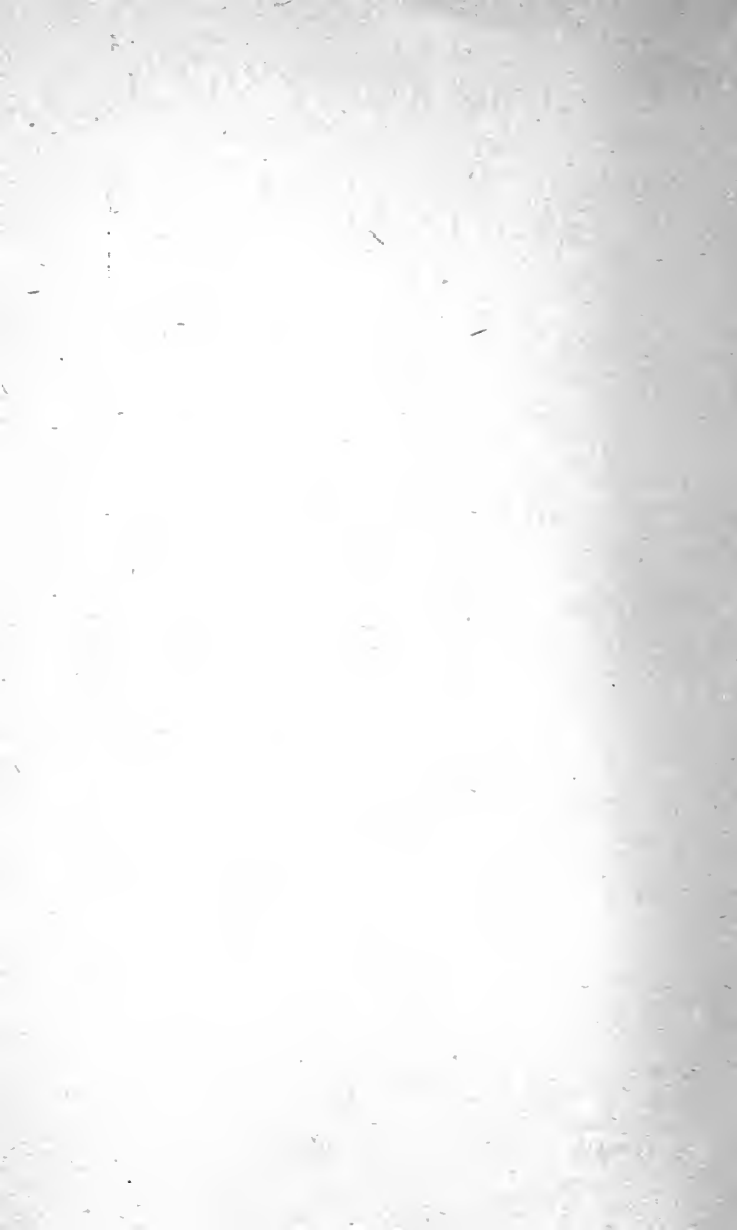
A Play in Four Acts

BY
ALFRED SUTRO

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TO

Arthur Bouchier and Violet Vanbrugh.

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The following is a copy of the original Bill

THE GARRICK THEATRE

Lessee and Manager, Mr. ARTHUR BOURCHIER.

*On Monday, the 31st of October, 1904, and every evening
following.*

A Play in Four Acts, by

ALFRED SUTRO

ENTITLED

THE WALLS OF JERICHO

JACK FROBISHER.....	Mr. Arthur Bouchier.
HANKEY BANNISTER.....	Mr. Sydney Valentine.
THE MARQUIS OF STEVENTON.....	Mr. O. B. Clarence.
LORD DRAYTON.....	Mr. David Domville.
HARRY DALLAS.....	Mr. H. Nye Chart.
BERTRAM HANNAFORD.....	Mr. J. B. Booth.
THE HON. WILFRID RENTON.....	Mr. Walter Pearce.
LORD MARCHMONT.....	Mr. Stuart Denison.
THE HON. JASPER TWELVETREES.	Mr. F. Cecil.
PETERS.....	Mr. F. G. Knott.
SIMPSON.....	Mr. Alfred B. Allen.
FOOTMEN.....	Mr. Harrison Carter and Mr. D. Imbert.
LADY WESTERBY, Dallas' sister...	Miss Kate Sergeantson.
MISS MORNINGTON.....	Miss Elfrida Clement.
THE DUCHESS OF SKYE.....	Miss Lena Halliday.
LADY PARCHESTER.....	Miss Mary Venant.
MISS WYATT....	Miss June Van Buskirk.
MARY	Miss Blanche Ellice.
LADY LUCY DERENHAM.....	Miss Muriel Beaumont.
LADY ALETHEA FROBISHER.....	Miss Violet Vanbrugh.



THE WALLS OF JERICHO.

PROPERTY PLOT.

ACT I.—ANTE-ROOM TO BALL-ROOM.

- 1 carpet, three-cornered shape.
- 1 Chesterfield settee and 2 cushions (pale blue silk).
- 1 four-seated ottoman, “
- 1 highbacked settee and 2 cushions, “
- 3 window seats and cushions, “
- 1 pair of pale blue curtains at window L. C.
- 1 “ “ “ for large opening R. C.
- 1 “ “ “ for windows off R. C.
- 2 “ of lace curtains for windows.
- 3 “ of tie backs.
- 1 club fender.
- 1 mantel-piece.
- 1 clock on same.
- 2 candelabra and shades.
- 2 photographs in frames.
- fireplace filled with palms and flowers.
- 4 large palms.

HAND PROPERTIES.

- Fan for Frobisher.
- Paper caps for guests.

ACT II.—DRAWING-ROOM OR BOUDOIR.

- 1 carpet.
- 1 square divan and 4 cushions.
- 1 Chesterfield settee and 2 cushions.
- 1 grand piano—music stool—music.
- 1 card table.
- 1 large gilt table with ornaments and writing materials.
- 4 gilt armchairs (2 on castors).
- 4 “ occasional chairs.
- 1 “ footstool (used again in Act IV).
- 1 “ screen.
- 2 occasional tables—bowls of flowers.

- 1 mantel-piece—clock—photos—ornaments, ash tray, etc.
- 1 easel and oil painting.
- 1 flower stand filled with flowers.
- brass fender and fire-irons.
- 1 pair of dark green silk curtains for windows.
- short lace curtains on casements P. S.

DISCOVERED ON CARD TABLE.

- 4 bridge scorers and pencils.
- 2 packs of cards.
- 2 ash trays—matches in stand.
- box of ladies' cigarettes.

DISCOVERED ON OCCASIONAL TABLE BELOW SETTEE.

- 1 hand mirror—cigarettes in case.
- matches in box—ash tray—photo in frame.
- small gilt clock.
- gilt purse with 4 bank-notes and a sovereign in it for Lucy to give to Alethea.

DISCOVERED OFF R.

- 1 tea-table with fancy tea-cloth on it.
- 1 silver salver.
- 1 “ teapot.
- 1 “ milk jug.
- 1 “ sugar basin and tongs.
- 4 cups and saucers and spoons.

ACT III.—LIBRARY.

- 1 large square Turkey carpet.
- 1 pair of dark red plush curtains for windows.
- 2 “ “ “ for book casements at back.
- 1 pair of lace curtains for windows.
- 1 Chesterfield settee covered dark green brocade, 2 cushions.
- 1 armchair.
- 6 occasional chairs.
- 2 armchairs.
- 1 dark oak high-backed armchair on castors.
- 1 “ writing table with drawers.
- 1 screen.
- 1 large round table with bowls of flowers.
- 1 club fender.
- 1 mantel-piece—clock—candelabra—ornaments, etc.
- 1 occasional table with magazines on it.
- Books, etc.—Cushions—Palms—Flowers.

ON WRITING-TABLE R.

- 1 blotting pad—1 inkstand and quill pens.
- 1 pen tray—1 paper cutter—1 paper weight.
- 1 gum pot—1 tape measure—1 clock.
- 1 table lamp and shade—1 case of note-paper and envelopes.
- 1 leather case of books—Bradshaw—telegraph forms, etc.
- 2 large red books—1 blue book.
- blue foolscap in left-hand drawer.
- 1 sheet “ discovered on blotting pad.

OFF L. FOR FROBISHER.

- 1 newspaper in wrapper—3 written letters in envelopes.
- 1 written letter open.
- 1 written letter on salver for servant.
- 1 small Tennyson for Lucy on settee.

ACT IV.—DRAWING-ROOM.

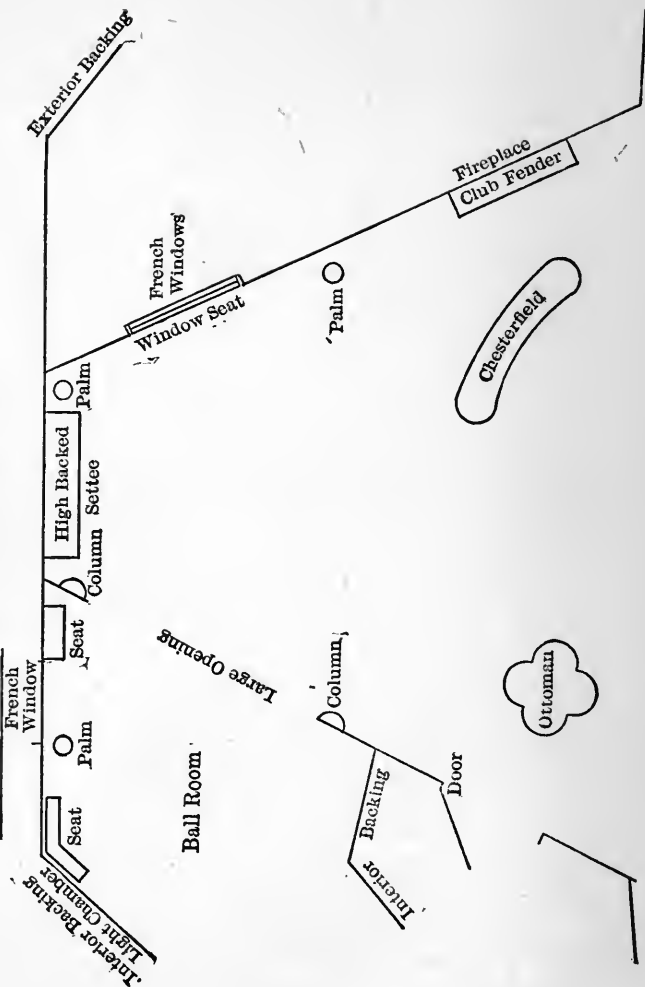
- 1 carpet and white rugs.
- 1 pair of pink silk curtains and tie backs.
- 1 “ of lace curtains.
- 1 Chesterfield settee, 2 cushions.
- 1 pouffe ottoman.
- 2 gilt armchairs, 1 on castors.
- 1 gilt occasional chair.
- 1 “ screen.
- 1 “ tea-table.
- 1 small occasional table and 1 small revolving book ped.
- 1 “ console table with 3 bowls of flowers.
- 1 “ Cheriton settee.
- 1 mantel-piece with ornaments, candelabra, etc.
- 1 flower stand.
- palms—flowers, etc.
- brass fender—fire-irons.
- footstool used in Act II.

DISCOVERED ON TABLE C.

- Large silver salver.
- 4 coffee cups and saucers and spoons.
- 1 silver sugar basin and tongs.
- 1 “ cream jug.
- 1 plate of small fancy sandwiches.
- 1 “ “ cakes.
- 1 letter (unstuck) for Frobisher.

"THE WALLS OF JERICHO."

ACT. 1



THE WALLS OF JERICHO.

ACT I.

(An Ante-room in Marquis of Steventon's House during a Ball. MISS WYATT, a vivacious young American, has cake-walked with TWELVETREES all the way from the ball-room.)

(Music Under Stage.)

(Applause.)

HANNAFORD. *(leaving LADY PARCHESTER and bowing low before MISS WYATT)* Miss Wyatt, my homage at your feet! After seeing you dance, I at last understand the meaning of the word "Evolution!"

TINY. *(fanning herself)* That's a doubtful compliment to Miss Wyatt. Mr. Twelvetrees should resent it.

TWELVETREES. *(puzzled)* Why? I don't see—

TINY. Mr. Hannaford implies that Miss Wyatt had a monkey at the other end. *(sits on ottoman R.)*

MISS WYATT. Oh!

HANNAFORD. *(below settee)* Miss Wyatt, our friend Miss Mornington corrupts my text. The dictionary meaning of the word evolution is "the appearance, in orderly succession, of a long train of events." You supplied the long train, and we, breathlessly beheld—

LADY PARCHESTER. Oh!

HANNAFORD.—the events.

TINY. *(to LADY PARCHESTER)* Yes—white and pink. *(goes up C.)*

MISS WYATT. *(rises and crosses L. C.)* Oh, Lady Parchester, what *does* he mean? I guess it's something unkind.

TWELVETREES. Don't be alarmed, Miss Wyatt:

Mr. Hannaford's utterances have no meaning; he's satisfied if they sound clever. (*takes HANNAFORD's place, who goes up C.*) (*at other end of settee L. HANNAFORD and MISS WYATT C.*)

MISS WYATT. (*moving to HANNAFORD*) A little too clever for me. Do you ever come off that fence, Mr. Hannaford?

HANNAFORD. Dear queen, why not climb up? There's room enough for two!

MISS WYATT. Thanks—I don't like sitting on spikes!—(*turns up with HANNAFORD*) Say, who's the melancholy Jacques over there, talking to our hostess?

HANNAFORD. Oh, that's our son-in-law, Frobisher. Don't you know him? (*LORD MARCHMONT goes up, looks off*)

TWELVETREES. (*moves to HANNAFORD*)

"Millionaire, married to Marquis's daughter,
Can't dance, so he's taken to whiskey and water!"

HANNAFORD. Oh, I'll cap that.

"Millionaire, married to daughter who's frisky,
Driven by Dallas to soda-and-whiskey!"

LADY PARCHESTER. (*to TINY*) And they say *we* talk scandal!

(*Enter a lady—LADY PARCHESTER joins her, goes up C.*)

TINY. Dogs *will* bay at the moon! (*TWELVETREES goes up C., talks to ladies*)

MARCHMONT. (*interrupting*) Miss Wyatt, I beg that you will not allow your candid American mind to be clouded by these base detractors.

HANNAFORD. (*to TWELVETREES*) Enter virtue on a giraffe!

MARCHMONT. In the first place Frobisher doesn't drink; in the second his wife isn't frisky, Dallas being merely an amiable person, a friend—with whom she flirts, as I dare venture to suppose they even flirt in America.

TINY. (*to LORD MARCHMONT*) Lord Marchmont,

I forgive you your revoke last night! (MARCHMONT joins two ladies up L. C.)

HANNAFORD. (to MISS WYATT) Marchmont has the crystal ignorance of the hereditary legislator. He discusses improved sanitation, sewage-farms, and similar airy trifles. He's an amateur philanthropist, like Frobisher—

TWELVETREES. (moving to HANNAFORD) Who is now gloomily approaching!

HANNAFORD. Frobisher and he both sob over the working classes, and howl for millenniums. (He points to JACK) Oh, look at him! Isn't he happy? He sees the writing on the wall. Add Hamlet to General Booth and flavour with Tolstoy—you have our son-in-law! (MISS WYATT moves up. MISS WYATT and TINY top of settee)

TINY. (rise) Add Punch to his dog Toby, and cook in vinegar—you have Mr. Hannaford! (HANNAFORD takes her hand)

HANNAFORD. (c.) Thank you, dear Bishop's daughter! Add you to me, and we have—(MISS WYATT and partner moves to behind settee)

TINY. Titania and Bottom! (turns up to JACK who has come to them) How are you, Mr. Frobisher? (they shake hands. TINY and LADY PARCHESTER are met by a man—They go off)

HANNAFORD. Ah, Frobisher! Let me introduce you to Miss Wyatt. Miss Wyatt is the most glorious exponent of the mystic measure known as the cake-walk. Do you dance it? (TWELVETREES gets behind HANNAFORD and JACK)

JACK. (c.) I'm afraid it's not quite in my line. (crosses to fireplace)

(Music.)

HANNAFORD. Miss Wyatt, shall I conduct you to the scene of your next triumph?

MISS WYATT. Let me remember who my partner is! (she consults her programme) Yes, please.

(TWELVETREES *joins lady L. C. and goes off*)

(TWELVETREES *and Lady from window*)

(*They move off with all the others, except JACK and MARCHMONT. As they go, HANNAFORD bends over to MISS MORNINGTON.*)

(*They go. MARCHMONT saunters up to JACK*)

MARCHMONT. Bored, Frobisher, eh?

JACK. Rather. And you?

MARCHMONT. Oh, I'm used to it. I shall slip off very soon, and go to the Club. Come?

JACK. My wife's here. (*at fireplace down L.*)

MARCHMONT. (*coming down R. of settee*) Of course—I forgot. By the way, I'm afraid we shall want some more money for those model dwellings of ours.

JACK. Not from me. We've sunk too much already—we're being robbed right and left.

MARCHMONT. Oh, one always is robbed, you know. But it's very good work—

JACK. It would be, if we looked after it ourselves.

MARCHMONT. My dear chap, what can we do? Live there, and keep the books? Have you tried living in Stepney?

JACK. Well, I've not spent all my life in Mayfair.

MARCHMONT. Don't be extreme, Frobisher!

JACK. That's always the cry . . . Oh no, I won't be extreme—but not another penny from me till a proper use is made of the money, and it goes into the pockets of the poor devils who need it!

(*JACK gets up and paces the room; MARCHMONT shrugs his shoulders; the MARQUIS and LUCY come in from the ball-room. LUCY on MARQUIS L.*)

JACK. Why, Lucy, not dancing?

LUCY. (*with a pout*) I was engaged to Lord Marchmont—

MARCHMONT. (*goes to her c. she is L. of MARQUIS*)
Oh, Lady Lucy, a thousand apologies! Frobisher and I were discussing our model dwellings. Will you forgive me?

LUCY. Yes, but come quick! It's the loveliest waltz, and half over already!

(MARCHMONT *offers his arm, and they go into the ball-room together.*)

MARQUIS. (C.) Model dwellings, eh? Homes for the pampered poor? Humanity, humanitomtity, as somebody calls it!

JACK. We take our pleasures one day or another. Mine at least are harmless.

MARQUIS. H'm—well—the word possesses also an invidious sense, as implying a certain naivete . . . I confess I am sorry to see you invading the domain of the dowager (*comes to JACK*) and the parson. However, each man to his folly—Tell me, do you know Hankey Bannister?

JACK. I've heard of him, of course—I may have met him.

MARQUIS. They say his mine is one of the richest in the world. He is a man worth cultivating. Lady Westerby has promised to bring him here to-night. And, by the way, you have a prejudice against that estimable lady—

JACK. I hardly know her.

MARQUIS. (*chuckling*) There was a little episode in her youth, of course—but when a wealthy banker marries a—damsel—he provides her, as it were, with a new passbook, eh? (*moving c. below settee*)

JACK. My objection is to her brother.

MARQUIS. Dallas? A most agreeable person. Alethea is dancing with him now; it was she who told us to ask him.

JACK. Yes. He is a friend of hers—he amuses her, I suppose.

MARQUIS. And it was for that very reason that

Dallasses were created—to amuse our women. Failing that, they turn to religion. My lady wife has turned to religion. You don't want Alethea to become like her mother?

JACK. (*with a smile*) Well . . .

MARQUIS. An awkward question, I admit, to put to a gallant man. Let us see, now—I wonder what the correct answer would be? There's the pedantic reply, of course—but that *is* pedantic. One would have to be charming, without being flowery, and compliment *both* ladies. Now I wonder—

JACK. The man is a foolish, vapid creature—

MARQUIS. (*comes again to F. a little above him*) Dallas? So much the better. The sensible husband rejoices when his wife selects a foolish Dallas to flirt with.

JACK. That is unfortunately not my point of view.

(*Music stops.*)

MARQUIS. *Make* it your point of view, my dear fellow, or what is even better, have no point of view at all. The age we live in is an elastic age; we must all be (*move to top of settee*) elastic to-day. Heaven, if I chose to worry! Has Alethea told you about Max?

JACK. Yes.

MARQUIS. (*round to front of settee*) Think of it, the young rascal! His own sister's companion. My wife has very properly packed the little lady off at once.

JACK. What will become of her?

MARQUIS. That is scarcely my concern. The girl is pretty, and the world is big.

JACK. Admirably put, but—

MARQUIS. (*comes below settee again to JACK*) There is no "but"; it *is* admirable. Admire, and imitate! I suspect you of a habit of brooding over things—

(*Enter TWELVETREES and two ladies in ball-room.*)

JACK. We cannot all have your happy disposition—

MARQUIS. Every pavement has its sunny side (*turns and goes up*)—we have only to exercise proper selection. Dear me, is that Lady Daintree—you will excuse me—

(*Crossing R. He goes off hastily to R. passing the dancers who are returning. Among these are LADY ALETHEA and DALLAS. They go to JACK.*)

DALLAS. All alone, Frobisher? Have you been practising the cake-walk?

ALETHEA. (*laughing*) Fancy poor Jack doing anything so frivolous!

DALLAS. Your husband is a philosopher, Lady Alethea; he despises us mere worldlings.

JACK. On the contrary, my dear Dallas—I envy you profoundly.

DALLAS. Do you though? Well, I would cheerfully change places.

JACK. (*L.*) What! Would the butterfly turn elephant?

DALLAS. (*C.*) Now I put it to you, Lady Alethea, am I a butterfly?

ALETHEA. (*R. C.*) I regard you as a most substantial, solid and meditative person. Jack, will you fetch me my fan? I left it in the ballroom. (*start music. JACK goes. LADY ALETHEA cross L.*)

DALLAS. Your husband doesn't like me.

ALETHEA. He wants everyone to be as serious as he is. (*sits in settee L.*) Ah me!

DALLAS. You sigh?

ALETHEA. It's a dreadful thing to be serious. You never are.

DALLAS. Is that a quality?

ALETHEA. It's a relief.

DALLAS. Don't you think I mean what I say to you?

ALETHEA. Dear me, no. Unless constant repetition is a proof of sincerity.

DALLAS. I don't think you quite know me——

ALETHEA. That is probably the reason for my liking you.

DALLAS. Then you do like me? (*kneels on sofa*)

ALETHEA. I am prepared to give you a certificate in writing to that effect.

DALLAS. They say there are 67 different ways in which a woman can like a man.

ALETHEA. Really! And in how many ways does a man like a woman?

DALLAS. Two. He either likes her or he loves her.

ALETHEA. And in how many ways does a man love a woman?

DALLAS. I should have said there are several. Now I know there is only one.

ALETHEA. How dull! And do you really wish me to believe that you love all women in precisely the same way?

DALLAS. I love one woman, and only one. I thought you knew it. (*MISS WYATT and HANNAFORD seen dancing. They sit. HANNAFORD fan bus. with JACK*)

ALETHEA. (*merrily*) She has not honoured me (*rise*) with her confidence. (*cross L.*) Here comes Jack with my fan. You had better go and have an ice. And please ask Alice Sabinet to dance.

DALLAS. If you wish it. But— (*below settee. Music stops*)

ALETHEA. She has scarcely danced at all, poor darling.

DALLAS. I obey. (*he rises, bows and goes as JACK returns. Moves round. DALLAS exits with lady followed by TWELVETREES and MISS WYATT R.*)

ALETHEA. (*taking the fan*) Thank you. Tell me, why were you so rude to Mr. Dallas?

JACK. Was I rude?

ALETHEA. You cultivate a deliberate boorishness. Is it because you are rich?

JACK. I don't think I pride myself on my money.

ALETHEA. You seem to. Mr. Dallas is my friend. He treats you with scrupulous courtesy. Why should you be rude?

JACK. I really didn't mean to be.

(Enter couple dancing.)

ALETHEA. You are uncivil to every man I care for. The fact is you hate me to speak to a man at all.

JACK. Ally!

ALETHEA. Yes, *it's true*. You would like to shut me up in a harem *(couple off)* and do nothing all day but listen to your schemes for workmen's dwellings and improved sanitation. Why don't you discuss them with Mamma? You ought to have married Mamma.

JACK. You are very cruel to me.

ALETHEA. You are cruel to yourself. You mope, I want to laugh. *(exit lady and gentleman)*

JACK. We used to laugh—together.

ALETHEA. On our honeymoon. You were nice—then. But we've been married three years, and now you want me to be dull, and a dowdy. *(crossing R. sits on ottoman. Couple in window off)* I'm sure you disapprove of my dress.

JACK. —I should like to kiss you— *(kneels on ottoman)* And I will too! *(he kisses her. She defending herself feebly, murmuring, "Oh, Jack, you'll make me so untidy!")*

ALETHEA. Why were you so rude to Mr. Dallas?

JACK. I'm sorry if I was rude. *(takes her hand)*

ALETHEA. He's going to take me to supper. *(releases her hand)* Do you object?

JACK. —No—

ALETHEA. That's fortunate. He's the best dancer in the room. Why don't you dance?

JACK. I wish I could.

ALETHEA. It's a marvel to me how you ever made all your money!

JACK. Am I such a fool, do you think?

ALETHEA. Oh no, but so helpless. Though, of course, your sheep multiplied, and all you had to do was to cut off the wool. Anyone could have done that.

JACK. (*moves L. C.*) Is that what Mr. Dallas says?

ALETHEA. (*rise*) Now aren't you a goose? Do you think he talks about you? You're a baby, that's what you are—a jealous baby.

(*Starts Music.*)

(*Enter LUCY and HANNAFORD and WILFRED.*)

JACK. Yes, I'm jealous.

ALETHEA. I don't mind that in the least (*LADY PARCHESTER and LORD MARCHMONT sit on window seat on stage—Bus.*), only please don't show it. Here comes that odious Mr. Hannaford:—

(*Enter HANNAFORD and TINY, TWELVETREES and a lady.*)

I'm afraid I'm engaged to him—

(*Enter TINY and LORD MARCHMONT.*)

TINY. (*coming up to her*) Good night, Alethea—I'm off.

ALETHEA. Bridge?

TINY. For an hour or two. I promised the Duchess. We're wasting time here.

ALETHEA. Mind you're not late to-morrow; we'll start directly after lunch. (*Puts on gloves.*)

(*Exit TINY R. WILFRED opens door and exits with her*)

(*Music strikes up—HANNAFORD approaches.*)

HANNAFORD. Lady Alethea, this is my dance.

ALETHEA. I make the stipulation that you shall limit yourself to three epigrams.

HANNAFORD. Shall you fast while I feast?

ALETHEA. That is quite beyond me; but it shall count for one. You have only two left.

(She rises and takes his arm. As they go they meet HANKEY BANNISTER and LADY WESTERBY coming in from R. I E.)

ALETHEA. *(to LADY WESTERBY)* Oh, Guin, how late you are! Please talk to poor Jack. He's so dull. *(When ALETHEA exits all exeunt. She moves on, following the rest of the dancers, HANNAFORD whispers to her.)* That makes two, Mr. Hannaford. *(they go; JACK advances to LADY WESTERBY)*

JACK. Good evening, Lady Westerby.

LADY WESTERBY. I'm bringing an old friend to you, Mr. Frobisher.

(HANKEY comes forward laughing, with outstretched hands; stares at him.)

JACK. (L. C.) Why, it's mad Jim!

HANKEY. (C.) Jack! Well met, old pal, well met.

(They shake hands with the utmost vigour and cordiality.)

LADY WESTERBY. Mad Jim!

JACK. You must forgive us, Lady Westerby—we haven't met since we were in Queensland together, a good many years ago—I raising sheep, and he prospecting for gold. No wonder that I didn't know the name of Hankey Bannister!

(LADY WESTERBY sits on ottoman.)

HANKEY. *(gleefully)* It sounds better than Mad Jim, don't it, your ladyship? We called him Fighting Jack, out there.

LADY WESTERBY. Mr. Frobisher is wondering how I came to know you. Please tell him.

HANKEY. Now?

LADY WESTERBY. Yes.

HANKEY. *(with sudden gravity)* A sister of mine

was in London, some few years ago, when I hadn't a penny to send her; and she fell in with Lady Westerby, who stood her firm friend. The poor girl's dead now, but her letters were full of Lady Westerby; and my first visit in town was to her, as my first nugget went to her that I picked up.

LADY WESTERBY. With a note—"from Helen Bannister's brother." And I mean to launch that brother, and find him a wife. (HANKEY *turns*) No, Mr. Frobisher, I do *not* intend to marry him myself. Mr. Bannister did me the honour to propose, as a matter of duty and gratitude, within forty-eight hours of his arrival.

HANKEY. - Oh, Lady Westerby, that was a secret!

LADY WESTERBY. I think your friend Fighting Jack dislikes me, but I have a great respect for him. Perhaps he won't dislike me quite so much now?

JACK. (*crosses c.*) As my father-in-law would say, that is an awkward question to put to a gallant man. I have never disliked you, Lady Westerby, but it has been my misfortune not to know you. Now that I do know, I am very anxious to know more. (HANKEY *moves a bit.*)

LADY WESTERBY. Your answer has all Lord Steven-ton's eloquence, with, I trust, more than his usual sincerity. And now of course you two are anxious to be alone. I will go the moment you have told me why you were given those nicknames.

(HANKEY *about to speak*)

JACK. Never mind about mine; but I will tell you why he was called Mad Jim. He had got a fancy into his head that because he was the seventh son of a seventh son he possessed strange powers of second sight——

HANKEY. (*roaring with laughter*) Oh Lord, how sure I was!

JACK. And he used to dig in the unlikeliest and most impossible places, because he had a sort of intui-

tion that he would find gold there, but he never did. And he would start again, somewhere else, with unimpaired confidence. So you've struck it, Jim?

HANKEY. Struck it rich, Jack, rich.

LADY WESTERBY. There must have been a method in his madness, after all!—And why was Mr. Frobisher called Fighting Jack?

HANKEY. A set of blacks went mad on rum, attacked a lonely farmhouse, killed the man, and carried off his wife and child. Jack went after them single-handed——

JACK. That will do, Jim, thank you. They called me Fighting Jack, Lady Westerby, because it was a wild country, and a man had to use his fists a bit, and be handy with his gun, so as to keep fellows like our friend Jim here in order.

HANKEY. Yes, he was Boss out there, he made the laws. What Fighting Jack said had to be done, and everybody knew it.

JACK. Tut, tut——

LADY WESTERBY. How is it we never hear of your Australian experiences, Mr. Frobisher?

JACK. I doubt whether they would contain much that would interest——

LADY WESTERBY. (*rises*) I shall ask, on some future occasion, to be allowed to judge that for myself. And now I will keep my word, and leave you two to your talk. Au revoir! (*she goes into the ballroom.*
JACK and HANKEY sits down on settee)

HANKEY. Well, Jack, old pal? I told you I'd get there in time.

JACK. I've wondered over and over again what had become of you, Jim. We were pals, we two—why didn't you let me know—when things went against you?

HANKEY. I left Queensland owing you a pretty tidy pile; and since then I've been wandering all over the world, and poor as Job till eighteen months ago; then I struck it, in Arizona. When I came here to-night,

Lady Westerby mentioned you. Frobisher! I hadn't forgotten the name! Well! And here we are, we two, in a Marquis's parlour!

JACK. And how long do you mean to stay here, Jim?

HANKEY. (*laughing*) Stay, is it? I'm here for good! When do *you* mean to go back to Queensland? You're tidily fixed up, her ladyship tells me?

JACK. I've a house in Grosvenor Square, a place in the country, a shooting-box in Scotland, a yacht on the Solent——

HANKEY. Jimimi! And you married the daughter of a Marquis!

JACK. Yes, I married the daughter of a Marquis.

(LORD DRAYTON (MAX) *in dress jacket, a black tie, has slipped into the room; and, after a hasty look round, taps JACK on the shoulder—JACK turns*)

JACK. Max! (*introducing*) My brother-in-law, Lord Drayton—Mr. Bannister.

(*Music stops*).

MAX. (*nervously*) I want a word with you—quick!

JACK. (*to HANKEY*) Excuse me one moment. (HANKEY *moves away below settee up L.*)

JACK. (*severely and a trifle contemptuously*) Well?

MAX. Don't you be down on me too! I want your advice!

JACK. It's a bit late for that. You should have come before.

MAX. It was only found out to-day. And, I say, they've turned her out!

JACK. So I hear.

MAX. It's awful to think of! I haven't a cent. What can I do?

JACK. There's only one thing to do.

MAX. Will you stand by me?

JACK. I'll come to your room by-and-bye, and we'll have a talk.

MAX. Before you go, to-night?

JACK. Yes.

MAX. Promise?

JACK. Yes, I'll come. (*dancers straggle in—MAX goes quickly, shakes JACK eagerly by the hand*)

HANKEY. Nice-looking boy. Seems a bit worried? (*comes from up L.*)

JACK. A little adventure with his sister's companion.

HANKEY. What! You don't mean—? The black-guard! I beg your pardon——

JACK. So you should! It's the merest trifle. Lord Steventon has done the right thing—the lady is gone. My dear chap, a girl more or less! In our set these things don't count.

(*Enter ALETHEA and MARCHMONT—LUCY and a gentleman*).

But see, there's my wife—come with me, I'll introduce you. Ally, this is an old friend of mine, Hankey Bannister. My wife and her sister, Lady Lucy Derenham.

ALETHEA. Glad to meet you, Mr. Bannister. You knew Jack, in prehistoric days?

HANKEY. Old pals, he and I, my lady. Fighting Jack, we called him out there.

ALETHEA. Fighting Jack! Oh, how nice. I didn't know he could fight. Can you, Jack?

HANKEY. Got a fist like a sledge-hammer, my lady.

ALETHEA. Really? There, I've discovered a quality in him at last! Lucy! Have you ever noticed Jack's fist? Fighting Jack, they called him. And so you've found gold, Mr. Bannister?

HANKEY. Yes, I have, my lady. Bucketsfull.

ALETHEA. How nice. And it sounds very easy. All one has to do is to go somewhere, borrow a pickaxe,

and dig. If I were a man I'd start for somewhere to-morrow.

HANKEY. I've come back with a pile, but there's a good many bones, by the banks of the river, that the ravens have picked clean.

ALETHEA. Ugh! Mr. Hannaford would make an epigram on that, wouldn't he, Lucy? I wish the ravens would make an epigram on Mr. Hannaford—he *has* bored me so terribly! Jack, Mr. Bannister must dine with us to-morrow. You'll come, won't you? Used Jack to be very talkative when you knew him, Mr. Bannister?

HANKEY. He was never a man to waste words, my lady.

ALETHEA. Oh, that's very diplomatic, isn't it, Lucy? See, here's papa. Papa is puffing, which is a sign of deep agitation. Do you want Mr. Bannister, papa? He is telling me how to find gold. (*The MARQUIS has come in, and goes to HANKEY, with outstretched hand, preceding DALLAS and LADY DAINTREE.*)

MARQUIS. My dear Mr. Bannister, Lady Westerby assures me that you and Jack are old friends. I need scarcely say that Jack's friends are mine. (*Shakes hands.*) (*Exit LORD MARCHMONT and MISS WYATT. DALLAS and DAINTREE sit in window seat.*)

MARQUIS (*to HANKEY*). I'm sorry you have come so late. Do you wish to dance? Lucy, have you any dances left?

LUCY. Not one, papa.

(ALETHEA gives JACK her fan.)

MARQUIS. Never mind a broken heart or two, my child; make room for Mr. Bannister (*Moving L.*) Give him the next (*Music starts*).

LUCY (*cooly*). Mr. Bannister has not asked for it—he may not want it.

HANKEY (*eagerly*). Oh, but I do! Only I can't dance—I mean to learn.

ALETHEA (*with JACK behind ottoman*). That shows a proper spirit—Jack despises dancing. (DALLAS *comes up and bows*). Are you my partner, Mr. Dallas? Lucy, give Mr. Bannister his first lesson—how to sit out a waltz! (JACK *moves up*.)

MARQUIS (L. C.) He seems a very pleasant person, Jack—that friend of yours. A trifle rough, of course—but the material is sound—it only needs polishing. You will put in a word for me?

(*Exit TWELVETREES and DAINTREE. They all go off together, leaving the MARQUIS and JACK alone.*) (JACK *moves down*.)

JACK (C.) For you?

MARQUIS. These men are always floating companies—he might like my name on the Board.

JACK. I'm afraid the public have grown rather shy of titles on a prospectus.

MARQUIS. That's so, unfortunately. There *was* a time when I could get a thousand guineas down, and three hundred a year, for signing my name. Oh, we've fallen on evil days! But, my dear boy, I am ridiculously hard up. And I've just had a little flutter in Kaffirs—that has fluttered the wrong way.

JACK. I thought you had made up your mind to leave the Stock Exchange alone.

MARQUIS. It was Oldenburg himself who gave me the tip. Oldenburg! At the Carlton—I had invited him to lunch. Buy Koffymodders, he said. He even went so far as to urge me to stake my undergarments on Koffymodders. And Koffymodders have gone down ever since.

JACK. Naturally.

MARQUIS. And, till my rents come in, I am ... just a trifle ... inconvenienced.

JACK. How much do you want?

MARQUIS. My dear fellow, there is a directness about that question which jars. (*Moves to L.*)

JACK (*c. grimly*). To what extent may I be permitted to oblige you?

MARQUIS. Ah! My dear boy, if you could spare a thousand—

JACK. I will pay it in to your account at Coutts's to-morrow. (*crosses.*) But you will forgive me if I—

MARQUIS (*stopping him with a gesture*). If I ever touch Kaffirs again, may I—become a teetotaller. And vegetarian. No, you needn't be afraid! I met Oldenburg in the Mall to-day, and had the satisfaction of cutting the odious creature dead. But, by the way, Jack—this Mr. Bannister—is he married?

(*JACK moves up to MARQUIS c.*)

JACK. No.

MARQUIS. How about Lucy?

JACK. She is in love with her cousin.

MARQUIS. At her age one is always in love with a cousin! Do what you can.

JACK. In what way?

MARQUIS. My dear boy, we shall have every dowager in full cry after Bannister, and Lucy, poor child, is practically motherless, now that my misguided lady wife concerns herself solely with what is passing in Heaven!

[*Enter HANKEY and LUCY. They remain up c.*]

JACK. Lady Westerly has constituted herself Bannister's guardian.

MARQUIS. But you, as an old friend, would of course have great influence. A word from you! And I flatter myself that you—who are *de la maison*—can recommend it.

JACK. (*quietly*) I have been most extraordinarily fortunate.

MARQUIS. When first I set eyes on you I divined your quality. The future of my poor Lucy disturbs me at times; men are so mercenary nowadays! See,

here they are—they are getting on splendidly. (*music stops; JACK moves*)

MARQUIS. Well, Mr. Bannister, have you had your first lesson?

[*Enter WILFRED.*]

HANKEY. Not in dancing, my lord; and admiration comes natural.

MARQUIS. Your exile has not blunted your wit. Ah, you are going to supper? (*there has been a movement among the guests; one of the men approaches LUCY and offers his arm; MARQUIS, JACK AND HANKEY talk at back*)

WILFRED. You'll go in with me, Lucy?

LUCY. Will I? Won't I? That depends. I'm doing a little speculation in Gold Mines.

WILFRED. Lucy!

LUCY. My dear Wilfred, don't be silly! Please retire into the background, with the grace that becomes you.

WILFRED. (*reproachfully*) You gave my dance to that fellow.

LUCY. Of course I did. Go and look for an heiress.

WILFRED. Lucy!

LUCY. (*merrily*) How well you do it! Just the right tone of voice. And the look—B.42, wasn't it?

WILFRED. So the moment has come when my heart is to break?

LUCY. Remember our compact:

Too poor to woo,
We can't be true,
So now, shoo!

(*she gives him a playful push*)

HANKEY. (*turning and seeing WILFRED*) Is this the gentleman whose dance I commandeered?

WILFRED. Yes.

HANKEY. Lady Lucy, I'll play the noble Roman,

and resign you to him. (*bus. Exit LUCY and WILFRED*)

MARQUIS. Well, we must find you another partner.

HANKEY. Guess I'll stay here, if I may, and have a bit of a talk with Jack.

JACK. I'm afraid I'm engaged to Lady Carstairs.

MARQUIS. I will make your excuses to that lady; and venture, however inadequately, to take your place. Stay with your friend. We three will have a little supper to ourselves, later on! (*the MARQUIS goes into the ball-room, the others all pass out to the left*)

JACK (*moves to fireplace and sits on fender*) Well, Jim! And what do you mean to do here? Marry, and settle down?

HANKEY. That's so. I'll do like you. I'll have a house in Grosvenor Square, a place in the country, a shooting-box in Scotland, a yacht on the——where? (*sits on settee*)

JACK. The Solent.

HANKEY. And a yacht on the Solent. By George, it makes my mouth water! You see a lot of people?

JACK. We have house parties in the country right through the autumn.

HANKEY. You've a big place, eh?

JACK. Forty bedrooms.

HANKEY. Jimimi! I'll have forty bedrooms, too!

JACK. With a man or woman in each one of them whom I don't care a rap about, and who don't care a rap about me.

HANKEY. Swells?

JACK. They're known as "The Smart Set."

HANKEY. Is it difficult to get into "The Smart Set?"

JACK. What are you worth?

HANKEY. It'll figure something like forty thousand a year.

JACK. Then you'll be welcome everywhere.

HANKEY. As easy as that, eh? H'm—I had

hoped it was a bit harder. . . . Of course, you had the luck to marry Lady——(*he tries to remember the name*)

JACK. Alethea.

HANKEY. Lady Alethea. Pretty name. I say, I like her sister.

JACK. You do, eh?

HANKEY. Tell me, do you think that I—?

JACK. What?

HANKEY. *You* know! Have I a chance?

JACK. (*surprised*) *You* want to marry Lucy?

HANKEY. Why not?

JACK (*rise*) You're the same Mad Jim you were. Look at me, you idiot! Look at me!

HANKEY. Well, I'm looking.

JACK. Hankey Bannister, if you want to be happy, I'll tell you what you should do. Keep a thousand a year for yourself, and give the rest of your money to the Trustees for the National Debt. (*Start music*).

HANKEY. Who's mad now?

JACK. *I* came home with a pile, five years ago : *I* felt just as you feel. *I* wanted to get into the "Smart Set"; *I* liked to shake hands with them, go to their houses, and belong to their clubs. Well, *I* did it all, and you can do it; *I* lost my money at billiards and cards, and betting, and the winners liked me because *I* lost. *I* spent my afternoons lending fivers and tens to younger sons: any one who wanted money had only to come to me: and they did come, men and women! *I* gave lunches, dinners, suppers—theatre parties, race parties, river parties; and divided a great many thousands among a handful of idle men and women, who tolerated me because *I* provided them with amusement. And then, just as the taste of it was beginning to pall, *I* fell in love, and married. That was my one stroke of luck. My wife has a head and a heart; and if she hadn't the misfortune to be the daughter of that exquisite old dodderer, she would be a fine woman.

HANKEY. She's very beautiful. (*gets round c.*)

JACK. Yes, but she is more than beautiful—she has a soul. Only she has been brought up in this miserable set—where the women do nothing but gamble and bet and flirt and talk scandal, and she can no more shake herself free than you and I can become “gentlemen,” and talk with an infernal drawl. We've a little son, but it's considered bad form to bother about your baby. It's bad form to think, or feel, or have an idea; you must make love to every woman you meet, or else she votes you a bore. You must wear the same grin on your face from morning to night; you mustn't be what you are, you mustn't *be* at all; you must resemble the others, dance with the others, laugh with the others; and if you don't, they call you extreme, and say you're a crank.

HANKEY. It's like that, eh?

JACK. Out in Queensland I was voted a fairly strong man. As you said, I was Boss. The luck had been with me, of course—money rolled in—but I made good use of that money. The last five years I was there I raised cities, brought water down from the hills, made homes for men. In Queensland I was a power: and I said to myself I'll go back, there'll be room for me in Old England. And I chuckled, just at the start, when I found all the dandies cringing. I said to myself, “Wait a bit—I'll show you what stuff I'm made of!” And I married, and shook off the fools, and thought I'd be Boss, as I had been out there.

HANKEY. And aren't you?

JACK. Boss! I found myself snared, caught by the heels, trapped! I found that I had grown sensitive to ridicule: and I live in the midst of people who only smile. I found that my will had forsaken me, that I no longer wanted to do things, that I had become a mere doll and a puppet. And now the rebellion in me is dying away: my wife does what she likes with me: my father-in-law, my friends, all the

people I meet, look on me as a kind of mild imbecile; the schemes I started languish because I haven't the pluck to carry them out; and I tell you that I, who have power to do things, I merely cumber the earth, and loaf—and all this because I came home with a pile, and thought myself a strong man! And now, Mad Jim, what will you do?

HANKEY. Well, if you think I've a chance with Lady Lucy—

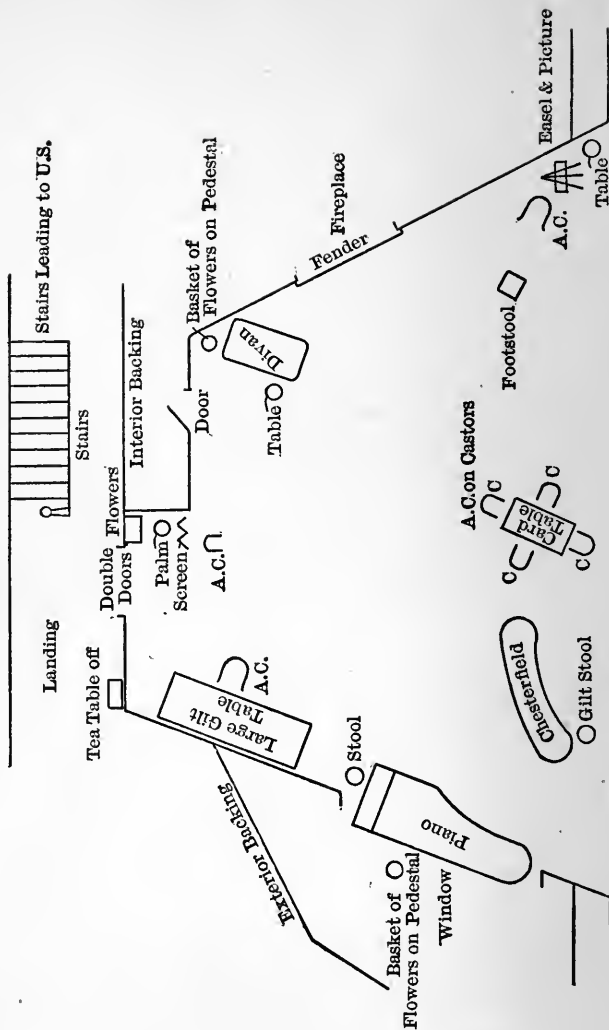
(*Enter LUCY, WILFRED, LADY PARCHESTER, TWELVE-TREES, ETC., (Music.)*)

JACK. Ah, you old ass! So that's it, eh? Very well, then—each man for himself—begin your training! The Cake-walk's the fashionable thing to do. Look here, I'll show you! (*they dance a few steps while the guests, who are straggling in, stand round and applaud vociferously*).

CURTAIN.

ACT. 2

STAIRCASE BACKING



ACT II.

(ALETHEA'S boudoir. A door at back and at L. C. ALETHEA, LADY PARCHESTER, the DUCHESS OF SKYE and MISS TINY MORNINGTON are playing at Bridge. LUCY is looking on. All the ladies are smoking. As the curtain rises the cards are being dealt by the DUCHESS, and each player collects her hand.)

DUCHESS. I call no trumps.

TINY. Shall I play to no trumps, partner?

ALETHEA. I double no trumps.

DUCHESS. You do? I re-double. That makes forty-eight.

ALETHEA. (*after a moment's hesitation*) I am content.

TINY. So am I. I have to be. And I play. Oh, partner, I haven't a heart to lead to you! (*she plays a card*)

ALETHEA. Gurr. . . . Lucy, go away, please, I want to swear.

DUCHESS. What luck! Look here, I can put my cards down. I have the ace of spades, ace and king of diamonds, and ten clubs to the ace, king, queen. I've never held such a hand in my life. It's a big slam! (*they all throw down their cards*)

ALETHEA. It's a true bill.

LADY PARCHESTER. Partner, you're an angel! I hadn't a trick in my hand. That's game and rubber. Seven times forty-eight: three hundred and thirty-six below and seventy above. (*they all add on their scoring boards*) Six hundred and twenty. You agree?

ALETHEA. (*scoring*) I make it six hundred and ten.

DUCHESS. No, no.

TINY. Six hundred and twenty's right. Six hundred and twenty shillings is thirty-one pounds; and ten pounds for the rubber makes forty-one. I shall have to owe it to you, Gladys. I'll pay you to-night.

ALETHEA. (*beckoning to LUCY for her purse*) Lucy—Thank you. Here, Duchess, ten, twenty, thirty, forty—and a sovereign. I don't know *how* much I've lost to-day! Let's cut for partners.

DUCHESS. (*rising*) I'm sorry—I can't play any more—I have to be going.

ALETHEA. Oh, Duchess, you'll break up the table!

DUCHESS. I'm ever so sorry—but I've promised to meet the Duke.

TINY. (*glances at LUCY*) He won't mind waiting half an hour.

DUCHESS. He would be *furious*—I daren't! Good-bye, Alethea, Tiny—We're coming to you to-night, Gladys. Good-bye, Lucy. (*Footman appears. She goes.* ALETHEA rises. LUCY rings bell at fireplace)

TINY. The cat!

LADY PARCHESTER. (*rise*) Whenever she has pulled off a big thing, she has to meet the Duke. (*sits in chair below fireplace*)

TINY. Yes. One can imagine him waiting at street corners, for his lovely Duchess!

ALETHEA. I've had an awful day—(*sitting on divan*) I must have lost at least two hundred pounds.

LADY PARCHESTER. What a tremendous hand she held!

ALETHEA. Well, we'll have tea. I've really half a mind not to touch another card.

LUCY. Till next time.

ALETHEA. Be quiet, you little thing.

(SIMPSON enters)

Tea, please. And put away the table. I'm at home now. O Tiny, why didn't you have a heart?

TINY. (*rise*) You had a lot of them?

ALETHEA. Eight—to the ace, king, queen. That silly woman had no right to re-double.

TINY. I expect she saw my hand.

ALETHEA. I daresay. She's capable of anything.

LADY PARCHESTER. I could have stopped the rot in hearts, you know. I had four to the knave.

LUCY. (*on divan*) Look here, if you're going to talk nothing but Bridge, I'll leave you. (*rises and moves R. C.*) It's bad enough to see you play.

(*Enter Footmen*).

TINY. It's an education for you, dear. (*rise and goes to fireplace*)

LUCY. I hate the beastly game.

LADY PARCHESTER. O Lucy, what a shocking thing to say!

LUCY. There's no commandment about loving Bridge.

TINY. If there had been, the game would have gone out long ago. But at least we love our partner like ourselves.

LADY PARCHESTER. And *that* can be carried to extremes! You heard about Lady Mayfield and Captain O'Connor?

TINY. Oh isn't that a ducky story? They had arranged to elope; they went on playing rubber after rubber, and missed their train.

ALETHEA. Where were they playing?

TINY. At Mrs. Warden's. Lady Mayfield had a run of luck, and wouldn't stop. But it was Captain O'Connor was lucky.

LUCY. Why?

TINY. Well, of course, they didn't elope after all; but he lost nothing by it.

LADY PARCHESTER. You mean?

ALETHEA. Lucy's here.

LUCY. Oh, don't mind me! I'd far rather you talked scandal than Bridge. But how on earth could

any one want to elope with Lady Mayfield? (*sitting on chair C.*)

TINY. She's precisely the sort of woman a man would elope with.

LUCY. Why?

TINY. Alethea wouldn't like my telling you.

ALETHEA. Certainly not. Tiny, you are far too well informed for a maiden lady.

TINY. The ingénue has gone out.

LUCY. What about me?

TINY. You're a baby.

LUCY. Am I? I know a great deal more than you think.

ALETHEA. Lucy, if you're not good I'll send you to bed.

LADY PARCHESTER. How dreadfully disappointed poor Sir John must have been that his wife didn't go!

TINY. Poor man! They had settled the damages, you know—five thousand pounds.

LUCY. For Lady Mayfield!

LADY PARCHESTER. Sir John would have parted with fifty wives for that.

ALETHEA. Well, better luck next time.

TINY. She has got hold of a Spaniard now—enormously rich—very young, and thinks she's all real!

(*SIMPSON and FOOTMEN come in with tea.*)

LUCY. Fancy! How foolish men are! Why, surely anyone could see——

ALETHEA. Now, Lucy, you've got to be good. What would Mamma say? Lucy, pour out the tea. The child's staying with me for a couple of days. (*exit SIMPSON*) Oh, the shocking luck I've had this week! I've lost a fortune, Jack *will* be angry.

LUCY. I wish that he would be for once. He's oceans too good for you.

TINY. We shall say that of Wilfred, my dear, when you're married to him.

LUCY. Marry Wilfred! Why, he hasn't a penny.

TINY. You don't care for love in a cottage?

LUCY. Why *will* you treat me as though I were a baby?

ALETHEA. I really don't think I'll play any more.

LADY PARCHESTER. Alethea! You won't break up my party to-night!

ALETHEA. Well, I'll try this once—but if my luck doesn't change—— (LUCY *hands her cup*.)

LADY PARCHESTER. Dinner at eight sharp, you know.

TINY. It's a pity—they're doing Tristan at the Opera——

LADY PARCHESTER. Why, *you* are not going to desert us!

TINY. Oh, no; but I love Tristan, I never have time to go, of course.

LUCY. *I'm* fond of the Opera. One can have such lovely talks in the boxes!

[*Enter JACK.*]

TINY. Ah! Mr. Frobisher!

LADY PARCHESTER. Are you coming with Alethea to-night?

JACK. To-night? We're dining at home.

ALETHEA. No, no, Jack.

JACK. Why, you asked Hankey Bannister——

ALETHEA. Oh dear, so I did. (*puts down cup. Rise*). Well, you must excuse me. I had quite forgotten.

LADY PARCHESTER. Why not bring him to me?

JACK. He doesn't play Bridge.

LADY PARCHESTER. He might like to look on. Why don't *you* play, Mr. Frobisher?

ALETHEA (*rise, at back of chair*). Oh, he cares for no games except cricket and football, and things like that, where you can hurt yourself. Jack, I've been shockingly unlucky.

JACK. Ah . . .

LADY PARCHESTER. What a divine husband who only says "Ah!" when his wife tells him that! My darling nearly has a fit.

JACK. How is Lord Parchester?

LADY PARCHESTER. I don't know. I haven't seen him for the last three days. I haven't the least idea where he is.

TINY. You should offer a reward, Gladys.

LADY PARCHESTER. "Of no value to anyone, least of all to the owner!" (*They all laugh, except JACK.*)
(*ALETHEA moves to writing-table.*)

TINY. (*moving to JACK*) Mr. Frobisher, is this Mr. Bannister the one they've been writing about?

JACK. I suppose so.

TINY. A bachelor?

JACK. Yes.

TINY. He's a millionaire, isn't he?

JACK. He's very rich.

TINY. Then will you say a word for me, please? Twenty-nine, distinguished-looking, daughter of a bishop. Strict religious education. Excellent references.

JACK. I'll tell him.

TINY. Of a loving disposition, and the usual accomplishments. Does he drop his h's?

JACK. No.

TINY. Deevy! May I consider myself engaged?

ALETHEA. (R.) What a madcap you are, Tiny!
(*setting on arm of sofa*).

TINY. My dear friend, it's quite time I got married: and you none of you do anything for me. My income from Bridge is regular; but, after all, not as safe as Consols.

LADY PARCHESTER. (*rise*) She's a beautiful player.

TINY. It's my bread and butter. But, when I'm Mrs. Bannister, I shall be able to afford myself the luxury of an occasional opera. You'll recommend me, Mr. Frobisher?

JACK. Warmly.

TINY. I'm quite serious, you know. Mr. Bannister will probably want to marry ; and I'm fully prepared to love anyone who's rich. Now I think I'll be going. (*LUCY rings bell*).

LADY PARCHESTER. I must be off, too. I'll drive you, Tiny. Good-bye, Alethea—good-bye, Lucy. Au revoir, Mr. Frobisher.

JACK. Au revoir.

TINY. (*to JACK*) Good-bye. And, as Charles I. said to Bishop Juxon, "Remember!"

JACK. You only propose to lose your heart.

TINY. My head will go with it. Good-bye! (*She and LADY PARCHESTER go*).

ALETHEA. (*lights cigarette*) Jack, I want some money. (*sitting on sofa R.*)

JACK. Again!

ALETHEA. I told you I had been very unlucky. Isn't it awful? I never once held a decent hand. That wretched Duchess must have the evil eye.

JACK. How much do you want?

ALETHEA. I haven't a penny. And I don't believe there's much at the bank.

JACK. I had a notice this morning that your account was considerably overdrawn.

ALETHEA. The poor thing! It sounds like vivisection!

LUCY. (*rises*) Jack, if you want to scold her, I'll go.

JACK. Oh, you needn't! (*LUCY kneels on chair L. C.*) It's no use my saying anything. Alethea does what she likes.

ALETHEA. Now isn't that absurd? Do you think I like holding bad cards?

JACK. My dear Alethea—

LUCY. Here, I'm off. (*She laughs and goes into inner room*)

ALETHEA. Well, if it's to be a lecture, let it be short. I'm all meekness and attention.

JACK. What's the good? I've said it all before.

ALETHEA. That's true.

JACK. You would only tell me I bore you.

ALETHEA. I trust I am too polite to say that.

JACK. (*moving to behind sofa*) I will pay in five hundred.

ALETHEA. Thank you.

JACK. By the way, I've had to lend your father some money again.

ALETHEA. Papa's shockingly extravagant—I shall really have to speak to him (*lights cigarette. Silence. Bus. Moves to window*).

JACK. Have you seen Archie to-day?

ALETHEA. Have I? I think so. Oh yes, of course I have.

JACK. As I was strolling home through the Park, I came across the little chap, in his perambulator, left all alone, and the nurse flirting with a soldier.

ALETHEA. The wretch! I wish you'd speak to her!

JACK. I did. She gave notice on the spot.

ALETHEA. There! Now I shall have to find another! Oh, you are a provoking man!

JACK (C.) Is your time so exhaustively occupied that you cannot spare an hour to look after your own son? (*JACK takes her hand, puts down cigarette*).

ALETHEA. Do you want me to wheel him about? You are too absurd. Don't you think your nurse flirted with soldiers?

JACK. I didn't have a nurse.

ALETHEA. Because your mother couldn't afford it, that's all.

JACK. We were very poor, of course—but no man ever had a better mother than I

(*ALETHEA rises and goes to fireplace.*)

ALETHEA. I know, I know. You've told me so often. And your mother nursed you herself, and I did *not* nurse Archie. I'm a heartless wretch, and so on. Shall we skip that part? (*JACK rises*)

JACK. Ally—

ALETHEA. Yes? (*moves c. to JACK*)

JACK. Does it ever occur to you that you are making me very unhappy?

ALETHEA. You make *yourself* unhappy. (*moves to him*) You are always grizzling. Why can't you take things as they are?

JACK. A man can't alter his nature. And I don't think I ask very much of you.

ALETHEA (*takes his arm*) But you do; yesterday you scowled at me because I was dancing with Harry Dallas—

JACK. *Harry* Dallas?

ALETHEA. That's his name.

JACK. Do you call him Harry?

ALETHEA. Oh, don't be so ridiculous! Of course I call him Harry. Everyone calls him Harry.

JACK. Ah!

ALETHEA. I don't know what you want. All the women we know call the men by their Christian names.

JACK (*putting his hands on her shoulders*) You are aware that I strongly object to your intimacy with him?

ALETHEA (*crossing to settee and sitting*) And I strongly object to your objection, so we are quits, and need say no more. (*pause*)

JACK. You can't make this little sacrifice for me?

ALETHEA. You've no right to ask it. I'm a free woman—I'm not a slave. And I've a grievance of my own. If you must always wear such a melancholy face when you go out, you had much better stay at home. Everyone was laughing at you last night.

JACK. Indeed?

ALETHEA. Of course. You looked as though you had a violent pain inside. It's really stupid, you know. If it bores you so much, why go?

JACK. Because you go.

ALETHEA. I'm not a child—I fancy I can be trusted by myself (*moves to settee*).

JACK. It's not a question of confidence (*sits beside her*).

ALETHEA. What then?

JACK. Put it that I like to see you.

ALETHEA. You are always jealous of the man I'm talking to.

JACK (*taking her hand*). There are certain men whom I do not consider fit associates for you.

ALETHEA. I can't accept your judgment—you are too prejudiced. And now let us drop the subject. I don't interfere with you (*goes c.*). I don't tell you how ridiculous it is to fritter away thousands in the East End.

JACK. That is very good of you.

ALETHEA. I let you live your own life—you must really do the same by me. We shall both be the happier for it. And here Mr. Balfour moved the closure! Where *has* that silly Lucy got to? (*She moves to the inner door.*) Have you seen Mr. Bannister to-day?

JACK. No; he's coming to dinner.

ALETHEA. Of course. Lucy shall do the honours, it's just as well. You'll leave them together for a little?

JACK. Are *you* matchmaking, too?

ALETHEA. One must do what one can for one's sister.

JACK. And how about Wilfred?

ALETHEA. Now what *has* Wilfred to do with it? She can't marry Wilfred, can she?

JACK. She's in love with him——

ALETHEA. Of course—but that doesn't matter. (*she opens the door and calls*)

JACK. Do you think it fair to Bannister?

ALETHEA. Fair? What *do* you mean?

JACK. You want her to pretend that she likes him.

ALETHEA. Oh, she'll do that all right.

JACK. I have a certain sense of honour——

ALETHEA (*pettishly*). Oh, have it amputated, do! It's worse than appendicitis! Lucy! (*knocks at door*)

(LUCY comes in.)

LUCY. Lecture over?

ALETHEA. See how crushed I am! Lucy, he wants to tell Mr. Bannister about Wilfred!

LUCY (*laughing—crossing to JACK. She is getting to end of couch*). What a silly old Jack it is. Why, Wilfred hasn't enough to pay for my gloves!

JACK. And what will you say to Bannister if he proposes?

LUCY (*dropping a curtsey*). Thank you, Mr. Bannister, I shall have much pleasure.

JACK. And not a word about Wilfred?

LUCY. Never a syllable! My dear Jack, I'm beastly poor, and I hate it.

JACK. You know what a loveless marriage means?

ALETHEA. (*sitting on arm of chair*) Oh, doesn't he talk like one of Mamma's dear Bishops? Only he means it all, and they don't. Why not remind her, Jack, that marriage is a sacrament, and made in heaven, and so on? (LUCY moves to ALETHEA. Crosses to JACK, who rises and goes down R.) Bless his dear little, innocent heart, he's so awfully serious about it! (LUCY goes to back of armchair)

(FOOTMAN; the MARQUIS stalks angrily into the room)

MARQUIS. Lucy, go away, I have to talk to Jack and Alethea.

LUCY. Fresh ructions about Max, Papa? Do let me hear?

MARQUIS. I have told you to go at once.

LUCY. And Jack wonders at my wanting to marry! (*she goes by the outer door up L.*)

ALETHEA. (*at back of settee*) What is the matter, Papa?

MARQUIS. (*C., with suppressed passion*) My dear Jack, I have every respect for you: you have qualities that I admire most profoundly; you are a most gen-

erous and chivalrous person; but you will forgive me if I protest, most emphatically, against your interference in matters that concern me, and me alone.

ALETHEA. Why, what has he done?

MARQUIS. He has prevailed upon Max to marry that woman of his!

ALETHEA. No! Impossible!

MARQUIS. The boy dared tell me to my face——

ALETHEA. (*with supreme indignation*) Jack!

MARQUIS. He has offered him three thousand pounds, and a farm in Queensland!

ALETHEA. (*derisively*) A farm in Queensland!

MARQUIS. Neither more nor less. The heir to the title! To make a gross mésalliance, and become a farmer!

ALETHEA. There must be some mistake—it isn't possible. (*goes to JACK*)

MARQUIS. (*turns*) Perhaps Mr. Frobisher will explain.

JACK. Max came to me—he loves the girl—and he feels there is only one thing he can do as an honest man——

MARQUIS. (*thundering, crossing to JACK. LADY ALETHIA comes down L.*) Rubbish, sir, rubbish! Pestilent and pernicious rubbish! An honest man must consider what he owes to his name and his rank. That is the first consideration.

JACK. He has wronged this girl, and is eager to repair the wrong——

MARQUIS. This is the merest transpontine sentiment; feeble, treacly melodrama.

JACK. Miss Merton is of very respectable family——

MARQUIS. Family, sir! A young woman who has disgraced herself has no family, And her father is of the usual kind of penniless and prolific parson. (*pause*). Truly, my dear fellow, I must ask you to descend from your ultra-moral attitude. Your virtue is becoming tedious. Wear a hair-shirt next your skin, if you choose, but allow my family to select their own linen!

You will be good enough to tell Max that you withdraw your offer.

JACK. That is impossible.

MARQUIS. (*swelling*) What, sir, what, sir! Impossible! Am I, the head of my house, to be interfered with and dictated to, as to the conduct of my own son? (ALETHEA *intervenes*) I flatter myself that I am the most patient of men; but upon my honour——

ALETHEA. Let me have a word with Jack, Papa. I fancy I can persuade him. (*goes c.*)

MARQUIS. (*going to door*) By all means, by all means. I leave our Christian Knight in your hands. (JACK *moves to piano, the MARQUIS moves up*) A little common sense, sir, is all that I ask. As for the boy, he has strict orders not to leave the house, so you will know where to find him. I have the honour to wish you good morning. (*the MARQUIS stalks out majestically*)

ALETHEA. (*fiercely*) I am angry with you; yes, angry.

JACK. I am sorry. (*coming R. of settee L. c.*)

ALETHEA. (*up c.*) You are so eaten up with conceit of yourself, so satisfied that you monopolise all the goodness of the world that . . . that . . . you are becoming simply unbearable. (*comes down*)

JACK. You are saying rather awful things.

ALETHEA. I am saying what I think, what everyone thinks. What business is this of yours? Max is a boy of twenty-five; he has done what thousands of boys have done before him. (JACK *makes a movement*) Oh I am sorry for the girl, of course; I will help her if I can. But what right have you to force my brother into a degrading marriage?

JACK. (*coming down*) There is no question of forcing—he came to me of his own will——

ALETHEA. He has generous instincts; he went to you, as to an elder man, for sympathy and advice.

JACK. And I gave him both.

ALETHEA. (*with rising vehemence*) Is there no episode in your own past life that you look back on with regret? Oh, you make me hate the very name of virtue! (*turns left to fireplace*)

JACK. Alethea!

ALETHEA. Yes, you do! You good people are so horribly intolerant. You have the whole of the East End to practise on—can't you leave my family alone? You want to prevent Lucy making a good marriage, you want to drag Max down, ruin him, ship him off to Queensland. It is abominable, all this. Yes, abominable. And I will not have it! (*she stands before JACK with flashing eyes; he remains stolidly quiet. SIMPSON comes in, with LADY WESTERBY; he announces her and remains trying to speak with ALETHEA*)

ALETHEA. (*going towards her*) Ah, Guin! You are just in time. I was nearly losing my temper!

LADY WESTERBY. Am I interrupting a tête-à-tête?

ALETHEA. Most pleasantly, I assure you. (*to SIMPSON*) Well, what is it? (*JACK takes LADY WESTERBY to chair—she sits—he gives her tea*)

SIMPSON. His lordship has returned, my lady, and would like a word with you at once. He is in the library.

ALETHEA. Ah! I had better go to him. You will excuse me, Guin? I shan't be long. (*she goes, followed by SIMPSON—he shuts door*)

LADY WESTERBY. I imagine I can divine the subject of your conversation. I was very anxious to see you. (*JACK offers her tea—she refuses*) Miss Merton is staying with me. (*sits down chair L.*)

JACK. With you! (*front of fireplace*)

LADY WESTERBY. Yes. I know her, of course—I had met her at the Steventons'. I heard last night of the poor child's trouble. And I sought her out.

JACK. That was good of you. . . .

LADY WESTERBY. The girl is very unhappy. She has seen Max. And she has told me what you propose.

JACK. And you think?

LADY WESTERBY. (*very emphatically*) That your plan is noble, and generous and wise.

JACK. That point of view is not shared by my father-in-law.

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, he of course will place his own comfort above everything else in the world!

JACK. My wife agrees with him.

LADY WESTERBY. Alethea? (JACK *nods*) Oh, you must persuade her. She has a very good heart. She does not realise, that is all. Then I was not wrong? That *was* the subject of your conversation?

JACK. Yes. I need scarcely tell you how deeply I feel for Miss Merton. But I fear I am powerless. (*moving to c. by back of chair*)

LADY WESTERBY. Powerless? You?

JACK. Yes. You see——

LADY WESTERBY. What did they call you in Queensland.

JACK. (*goes behind her to c.*) Oh, Queensland! Out there one believed in things. Here it is different.

LADY WESTERBY. On the surface, that's all. Human nature's much the same. And the girl will make an excellent wife. She's of good family—a very sweet creature. Max adores her. He's weak, but his instincts are sound.

JACK. There is the question of course, whether I am entitled to interfere. (*she moves slightly in her chair*) I acted on impulse. I am only a savage, a barbarian—what do I know of the aristocratic code of honour? (*sits in settee R. C.*)

LADY WESTERBY. I thought there was only one code. (JACK *turns*) And in any case—I don't see why this child should be made to suffer. . . .

JACK. Poor thing, poor thing, I am terribly sorry for her. . . . But, after all, *will* she suffer so much?

LADY WESTERBY. (*sinking her voice*) Her story is my story. . . .

JACK. Yours!

LADY WESTERBY. Yes, mine. Don't you know?

JACK. I had merely heard vague rumours——

LADY WESTERBY. The name I bear is that of a dear old man who married me ten years ago. He died, and left me his money. That whitewashed me. But . . . in the years before, I had known very great suffering.

JACK. Had you no friends?

LADY WESTERBY. What friends has a woman? She has disgraced herself, her own sex shrinks from her; yours—offers only one kind of assistance.

JACK. That's true enough. (*rises*)

LADY WESTERBY. I struggled through; but, in those days, I vowed that if I got back I would never say no to a woman.

JACK. Lady Westerby, hitherto I've met you with the others, just like the others—

LADY WESTERBY. Why not? I don't go about blowing horns, or predicting the end of the world. But I do what I can.

JACK. (*moving to fireplace*) I have tried, too. But only in the East End. Here, with these people, this cotton-wool set, one's afraid to speak above a whisper. The great thing is to have the right number of buttons to your coat. They regard me as a Barnum freak. I am like Gulliver among the Brobdingnagians.

LADY WESTERBY. The Lilliputians, I should have said.—You have more than once come across lions in the forest, I suppose, Mr. Frobisher?

JACK. Not in Australia! but I have shot big game in my time.

LADY WESTERBY. And lions are alarming beasts?

JACK. Very.

LADY WESTERBY. And yet, when their skin is stretched on the carpet, a child will run over it, without fear! Don't think me impertinent. . . .

JACK. What would you have a lion do in a drawing-room?

LADY WESTERBY. (*with emphasis*) Roar! and those who are afraid shall fall on their faces!—Oh, I should like to speak out my heart to you!

JACK. Do : I have need of a friend to-day.

LADY WESTERBY. Yes ; I *am* your friend ; I am glad that you know it. And being your friend, I will ask what it is has chained you, put you in a cage, you who led men ? What has become of your strength, your will, and your power ?

JACK. I am not alone. I have others to consider—

LADY WESTERBY. You are a man—there are not many ! and the man must rule.

JACK. If I let myself go I should break things.

LADY WESTERBY. There can be too much safety-valve—(JACK *looks at her*) oh, I speak what I know ! There can be too much velvet glove—if the iron hand never is felt it might as well not be there ! Why, is it Lord Steventon who stays you ? One breath from you, and all that is left is a wig and a corset. Is it your wife ? I love Alethea. She is good to the core, but she requires guidance.

JACK. Guidance ! I—

LADY WESTERBY. Mr. Frobisher, Mr. Frobisher, we women cry out at tyranny, but in our hearts we admire the tyrant. They call us complex, we are as elementary as the tide beneath the moon. Govern us, we cry to our husbands—and if you do, we scratch, but our soul is at peace. Alethea is your fit mate, but she doesn't know you. How should she ? To-day you must decide. Which will you be—the Man of Queensland or the Gentleman of Mayfair ?

JACK. The Man of Queensland, by God ! Lady Westerby, you are right ! I will stand by the girl, and Max. That's settled. (LADY WESTERBY *rises*) I would like to see her—

LADY WESTERBY. Come with me. At once—why not ? It's only two seconds—

JACK. That will be best. Let us go.

(*They are moving towards the door, when it opens and ALETHEA comes in. JACK gets above door round to R.*)

ALETHEA. I'm sorry to have stayed so long ! I am

like the Sabine women, trying to make peace between husband and father. You are not going?

LADY WESTERBY. Yes, Alethea. I came only on an errand of mercy. You'll explain, Mr. Frobisher. I shall wait for you downstairs. (*Exit*)

JACK. I'm going with her to see Miss Merton.

ALETHEA. Miss Merton! Why?

JACK. She is staying with Lady Westerby. She has no friends and no home.

ALETHEA. Why should *you* go?

JACK. I must see her—to settle what had best be done. On my return I will tell you what I have decided.

ALETHEA. (*acidly*) What you have—decided?
(*JACK goes up*)

JACK. Yes. (*Exits*)

(*ALETHEA sits at the piano, and plays a wild and violent air. LUCY comes from the inner room, pirouetting—She peers at ALETHEA, who takes no notice, and goes on playing.*)

LUCY. (*singing c.*)

“ Every wife and every husband,
Now and then have little jars :
It will be the same in Greenland,
As no doubt it is in Mars.”

(*she shuts door*)

Ally! (*kneeling on settee*)

ALETHEA. (*over her shoulder*) What?

LUCY. Big row? Great battle on the—Yalu?

ALETHEA. Oh, really, there are times when he is too—exasperating!

LUCY. (*sits on settee*) You have the sweet resource of music—you were thumping the piano as though it were Jack. What *is* all this trouble about Max?

ALETHEA. He wants him to—never mind! You're too young!

LUCY (*sitting*) Ally, you *do* play the elder sister

over me, just because you were born two or three years before, don't you?

ALETHEA. I'm very vexed, I tell you; very, *very* vexed. (*she sits at the piano again, and plays*)

LUCY (*thoughtfully*) This is a very bad example to set before a young girl who is thinking of marrying Hankey-Pankey.

Will you be mine, asks Hankey-Pankey?

I shall bow, and murmur "Thanky!"

(*rises and goes to her*) What *has* Max done?

ALETHEA. (*over her shoulder*) I told you to be quiet.

LUCY. I suppose it's all about Miss Merton? A case of—Cherchez—Miss Merton!

ALETHEA. Lucy! *Will* you leave off?

LUCY (*sits in settee*). I am twenty—and on the eve of being engaged. And besides I've flirted—very—seriously—with Wilfred. But then it's jolly to know that one can go on flirting after one's married.

ALETHEA (*discontentedly*). Lucy! Lucy! if Mamma heard you!

LUCY. Don't preach, there's a good girl. I was only thinking of Mr. Dallas.

ALETHEA. Mr. Dallas? You don't imagine that I—

LUCY. That you flirt with him! Heavens, no. Only mine shall be Wilfred, that's all.

ALETHEA (*rising again*). Lucy, I hate all this talk, and you know it. Mr. Dallas amuses me, and one has to be amused. And please don't vex me to-day. I'm angry enough, I can tell you. If you knew how Jack has behaved! Oh it's shameful—shameful! (*She sits at the piano again, and plays more violently than ever. SIMPSON comes in with DALLAS, whom he announces. ALETHEA merely nods to him and goes on playing.*)

LUCY. Talk of the—How are you, Mr. Dallas? Don't interrupt Alethea! She's improvising.

DALLAS (*sitting, after a glance at ALETHEA*). Good afternoon, Lady Lucy. You enjoyed yourself last night?

LUCY. You only gave me one dance.

DALLAS. I was conscious of my audacity in demanding even that one.

LUCY. You were so conscious of your audacity that I nearly—had—to—wait.

DALLAS. My partner took such a long time swallowing her ice (*looks up*).

LUCY. Not so long as I shall take swallowing your excuse. But then the women all run after you, don't they?

DALLAS (*bowing—sits beside her*). It pleases her ladyship to be satirical.

LUCY. Mr. Dallas, will you be good enough, in a few well chosen words, to give me your opinion of our sex?

DALLAS. I need only one word: Exquisite.

LUCY. That's rather like the mugs they used to give me, with "A present from Margate" stamped on them.

ALETHEA (*over her shoulder still playing*). Lucy!

LUCY (*rises and dances*). Dear me—she heard! (*to DALLAS.*) But then, I suppose you keep all your clever sayings for married women?

DALLAS. I'm afraid I have no clever sayings, Lady Lucy. I am a plain, unvarnished man—

LUCY. (*rise*). The varnish is all right! But I'm just a little disappointed, Mr. Dallas.

DALLAS. I am sorry.

LUCY. You have the reputation, you know, of being such a lady-killer. But then I suppose I'm more exacting, being so young, and had better retire to the nursery. Unless you *very* much want me to stop?

DALLAS. It pains me, of course, to know that I'm not satisfactory.

LUCY (*passing*). I am indeed sorry I cannot accept your pressing invitation to remain with you. Good afternoon, Mr.—Illusion (*with a sweeping curtsey*).

(*She goes*: DALLAS, after a moment, advances to ALETHEA, who seems lost in her music.

DALLAS. How angry you are!

ALETHEA (*Leaving the piano*) How do you know I am angry?

DALLAS. I know all your moods.

(ALETHEA *moves to C.*)

ALETHEA (*rise*). Yes, I am very vexed. But don't let us speak of it. Have you had tea?

DALLAS. Thanks. Why were you vexed?

ALETHEA (*rings bell*). Oh, heaps of things. I'm glad you've come. Very.

DALLAS (*sits in chair L. C.*) Is the ogre out?

ALETHEA. I've told you not to call my husband an ogre. But you may to-day.

DALLAS. Then it is he who has vexed you?

ALETHEA. Of course—who else? He's like all husbands, I suppose—they're an impossible race.

DALLAS. You have my profoundest sympathy. (*laughs*)

ALETHEA. It's a silly world, isn't it? You may smoke, if you like.

(*Enter SIMPSON and two footmen who take away tea things.*)

ALETHEA. Give me one of your cigarettes.

(*He does so*)

ALETHEA. You'll find a match over there. (*he gives her one, strikes a match, and rests his hand against hers as he holds the match for her*) Don't. I've told you before that you mustn't be foolish.

DALLAS. Alethea— (*moving on her L. sets down match*)

ALETHEA. I've told you before that you mustn't call me by my Christian name. But you may to-day. Only to-day, remember.

DALLAS. Alethea.

ALETHEA. Well, go on.

DALLAS. Alethea.

ALETHEA. You're really not a parrot, you know.

DALLAS. It's only that I like to linger on the name.

ALETHEA. It's a stupid, stiff, angular and unromantic one.

DALLAS. It's yours.

ALETHEA. "A poor thing, but my own." Well? Have you nothing more to say?

DALLAS. A great deal.

ALETHEA. Then say it, please, I'm cross to-day—I want to be amused. I enjoyed my dances with you last night. I believe you to be a thoroughly unprincipled person, but you dance divinely.

DALLAS. You must not believe all that's said against me.

ALETHEA. I don't. I only believe half. But that's quite enough.

DALLAS. My sister is no friend of mine, I know.

ALETHEA. Guin merely shrugs her shoulders at you.

DALLAS. We have never been in sympathy——

ALETHEA. She's a good woman, and you're not a good man. But then you don't pretend to be—and that's something.

DALLAS. I find the world a very pleasant place; and the little sins are more attractive to me than the little duties.

ALETHEA. They're better dressed, you know—duties are dowdy.

DALLAS. Have you no little sins?

ALETHEA. No. I am ridiculously good. (*sits on ottoman*)

DALLAS. (*sits on divan*) As your physician, I advise you to change your diet. Has it never struck you how complacently old people—*good* old people—refer to the follies of their youth? Just as we tell tales of our schooldays. They whacked us for them at school.

ALETHEA. I was never whacked. I was even good at school. I shall have nothing to think of when I'm old.

DALLAS. Alethea . . .

ALETHEA. When I allowed you to call me by my Christian name I did not suggest that you should do scales on it. Have you nothing to say?

DALLAS. I am saying many things to you, and you know it.

ALETHEA. Wireless telegraphy? I feel no shock. (*hand bus.*) No, thank you, my hand's quite comfortable where it is. Be bright—you can, sometimes. I tell you I'm dull!

DALLAS. (*rise*) What shall I talk about?

ALETHEA. I'm not a professor, giving out a subject for an essay.

DALLAS. There is one thing I have at heart—

ALETHEA. (*laughing lightly*) How cramped it must be, poor dear!

DALLAS. You think I have no heart?

ALETHEA. You know, you're becoming monotonous. Oh, I'm not in luck to-day!

DALLAS. (*rising bends over her*) Why do you keep me at arm's length?

ALETHEA. We are entitled by Act of Parliament to so many cubic feet of air—and I have never measured the precise length of my arm.

DALLAS. I could suggest a pleasant employment for it.

ALETHEA. That is impertinent. (*snatches her hand away*)

DALLAS. One's imagination is never polite. How adorable you are!

ALETHEA. (*faces him*) And they call *you* a brilliant conversationalist!

DALLAS. No woman is vexed to be told she is adorable.

ALETHEA. (*gets rid of cigarette*) Dear me, I'm not vexed. (*rise*) I simply am bored. I don't care two straws whether I am adorable or not. I want to be amused.

DALLAS. I am serious to-day.

ALETHEA. I prefer you when you are flippant. (*sits in settee*) Do you know, you remind me of the topsy-turvy house at the Paris Exhibition?

DALLAS. Why?

ALETHEA. Because your head is in your heels—you dance so well and you think so badly.

DALLAS. (*sits on back of settee*) Do you know what I think?

ALETHEA. Oh yes, you are a philanderer—you are always wanting to make love.

DALLAS. There you wrong me.

ALETHEA. I met a woman once who loved you.

DALLAS. Does that seem so strange?

ALETHEA. Well, frankly, it does—to me.

DALLAS. Alethea!

ALETHEA. You've got it quite pat by now. You know, if I had been a man, I should be just like you.

DALLAS. You could pay me no higher compliment.

ALETHEA. You're easily satisfied. We're only scum, we two!

DALLAS. Scum! Oh!

ALETHEA. Or call it froth. The man I loved must do something, be something——

DALLAS (*with a sneer*). Like your husband?

ALETHEA (*rises and crosses L. C.*) He comes nearer to it than any man I know.

DALLAS (*laughing*). He!

ALETHEA. But, with your permission, we will not discuss my husband. We are talking of you: and the man *I* should have been. (*sits on window chair, C.*) *I* should have gone about telling women I loved them, and laughing that they should be such fools as to believe me; *I* should have been vicious, and made fun of everything——

DALLAS. You are not painting me in very glowing colours.

ALETHEA. (*nodding*) We know, you and I. We are twins.

DALLAS. (*passionately*) I love you.

ALETHEA. (*lightly*) Well, that of course is a pity.

DALLAS. I've never spoken before—I didn't intend to to-day—I've been content to be merely your friend—

ALETHEA. That was very good of you.

DALLAS. But now things have happened. I don't know what—I don't care. But I see *he* has hurt you, and I love you! (ALETHEA *rises and crosses* R. C.) Don't let us pretend any longer! Do you think I don't know that he bought you, as he'd buy a bale of wool——

ALETHEA. Mr. Dallas! (*haughtily*). Had I been a man, Mr. Dallas, I should not have been so foolish as to show my contempt for the woman I was making love to——

DALLAS. Contempt! Alethea! (*losing all self-control he rushes wildly to her and seizes her in his arms. JACK'S voice is heard outside*).

ALETHEA. (*struggling*) You fool! Let me go! Let me go—let me go! (*at the door*) How dare you! (*she breaks from him, and rushes into the inner room. The door has scarcely closed upon her when JACK comes in. DALLAS is unable to regain his self-command, and for a moment the two men are eyeing each other*)

DALLAS (*with an effort*) Lady Alethea has just left me.

JACK (*with rigid composure*) Ah!

DALLAS. I was going . . .

JACK. Good-bye. (DALLAS *goes hastily*).

(JACK *rings. SIMPSON comes in*).

JACK. Her Ladyship is not at home to Mr. Dallas in future.

SIMPSON. Very well, sir. (*he goes*).

(*The inner door opens, and ALETHEA appears. She is evidently frightened, and ill at ease, though she affects perfect calm*).

ALETHEA. Well, Jack—what have you settled about Max?

JACK. (*after long glance at her*). We will discuss that another time. (*he turns on his heel and goes, leaving ALETHEA puzzled and distressed*).

CURTAIN.

ACT. 3

Bowl Flowers
on Ped

Oak Chamber

Small
Cabinet

Fireplace

Book Case

Club Fender

Table

Screen

Palms

A.C.

Table

A.C.

Book Case

Door

Interior Backing

Interior

Backing

Double
Doors

Stool

A.C.

Screen

Exterior Backing

A.C. on Castors

Chest of Drawers

Large Oak
Writing Table

Draw

Waste Paper Basket

French
Window

Lace Curtains

ACT III.

(*Curtain. Music. In the library. LUCY is coiled on sofa, reading. ALETHEA comes in R. LUCY looks up*).

LUCY. Hullo, Ally? Jack back yet?

ALETHEA. No . . . (*moves to fireplace—down to window*).

LUCY. I *was* surprised to see him go off with Hankey Pankey last night!

ALETHEA (*nervously*). He said nothing more?

LUCY. Only what I told you. He was going to be late, had to be up early, and would sleep at the Club.

ALETHEA. It's very strange. . . . How was he?

LUCY. Funny.

ALETHEA. How funny?

LUCY. Well, not in a jovial way. There was a frown on him all the time that sets one's teeth on edge.

ALETHEA. Did he leave you and Mr. Bannister alone at all? (*sits on chair down L.*)

LUCY. Yes, but only because we bored him, I think. He had letters to write, he said. And I played to my little man, and sang to him, and he was in Heaven. I dressed the part prettily, I think—I wore white muslin.

ALETHEA. White muslin?

LUCY. You see, it needed some study. He hasn't met a woman for fifteen years or so, and highly refined creatures like us can't be appreciated right off. So I did my Jane Austen.

ALETHEA. (*discontentedly*) Ah!

LUCY. Yes—I was all muslin and innocence. I was peeping into the world from behind a rose-bush. Oh, I can tell you I am rather pleased with myself!

ALETHEA. (*rise*) I hate to hear you talk like this!

LUCY. (*very surprised, half raising herself on her elbow*) What do you mean?

ALETHEA. (*turning away*) Don't speak as though you hadn't any heart or feeling. . . . (*to fireplace at back*)

LUCY. Upon my word!

ALETHEA. Oh, I haven't set much of an example to you, I know. But, after all—

LUCY. After all, what? Don't you want me to marry Mr. Bannister?

ALETHEA. Yes—if you're fond of him.

LUCY. He's not so bad.

ALETHEA. Oh, don't make yourself out so horrid! (*coming down to her*)

LUCY. Horrid! (*turns*) Are you going to give me a lecture?

ALETHEA. (*sits beside Lucy*) Oh, look here—we've been badly brought up, we two, I know—but we've always cared for each other—

LUCY. What's up, Ally?

ALETHEA. Nothing—what should be—why? Only I feel—don't you see—I'm responsible, somehow. I'm the elder sister. I've only shown you my frivolous side—and that's been wrong, I suppose. I *did* love Jack when I married him—

LUCY. Of course you did. Well?

ALETHEA. You're only a child—what do you know about things? I've made fun of Jack and all that—but I tell you—the fact is— (*picks up paper*) Hark! Was that he? No. . . Ah well—so it's all right with you and Mr. Bannister? (*rise*)

LUCY. (*nodding*) He's coming this afternoon; and, if I like—

ALETHEA. He has only seen you twice—

LUCY. That's all. It *is* a bit sudden. But he's so unsophisticated that any girl could snap him up at once. And somebody's sure to tell him about Wilfred—and I'd rather be engaged first.

ALETHEA. Why not tell him yourself?

LUCY. That's not a bad idea. (*moves to her*)

ALETHEA. Be frank with him—say what there is to say. I like his face—I'm sure he's an honest man. Though he must be that, of course, as he's a friend of Jack's.

LUCY. (*meditatively*) A bit of a bore, I fancy. (*rises and goes to back of settee*)

ALETHEA. (*sits in settee*) (*earnestly*) Don't speak like that of the man you mean to marry!

(*LUCY leans over and passes her hand across on ALETHEA'S shoulder*)

What are you doing?

LUCY. (*sitting on back of settee*) Looking for the wings. They must be sprouting somewhere.

ALETHEA. Lucy, I've had a shock!

LUCY. Shock?

ALETHEA. Oh, never mind how—it's nothing, of course—but it has made me think. Oh, I wish I hadn't gone out last night!

LUCY. Did you lose?

ALETHEA. No—I had wonderful luck. Only I hate the game. I don't mean to play any more.

LUCY. I fancy I've heard that already.

ALETHEA. Oh, they are such sharks, those women! The Duchess made a revoke—she did it on purpose, of course—and I found it out, and there was quite a scene. And Gladys and Tiny were fighting all the evening. Poor Tiny, I'm sorry for her. But I've had enough of it.

LUCY. H'm!

ALETHEA. Oh, I mean it! I shan't play any more. I'm going to lead a different life altogether.

LUCY. You should see a doctor, my dear—it may be measles.

ALETHEA. Don't be silly—I'm in earnest (*sits on settee*) And I want you . . . to be different too.

You're a very good girl—all this is only pretence. You must like Mr. Bannister, or I'm sure you wouldn't marry him.

LUCY. I like him well enough, but I'd marry him any way.

ALETHEA. I know you better.

LUCY. You'd have married Mr. Dallas if he had been rich—

ALETHEA. Dallas! Ah, that reminds me— (*she rings—as she passes the sofa she takes up LUCY's book*) Tennyson! You reading poetry!

LUCY. (*calmly*) Hankey Pankey's coming.

ALETHEA. (*discontentedly*) Ah (*moves down*)
L. JAMES *comes in*) I'm not at home to Mr. Dallas in future.

JAMES. I know, my lady (*LUCY looks up*)

ALETHEA. What do you mean?

JAMES. Mr. Frobisher told me yesterday—

ALETHEA. Ah—very well—all right—yes—very well— (*JAMES goes*)

LUCY. (*rise*) Hullo! What's up?

ALETHEA. (*very perturbed*) I thought I told you not to bother.

LUCY. (*on LADY ALETHEA's R.*) Why won't you see Dallas any more, and why did Jack——

ALETHEA. (*moving R.*) Be quiet—leave me alone. (*LUCY has risen and has gone up to her—ALETHEA turns away*)

LUCY. Ally!

ALETHEA. I'm going to the nursery.

LUCY. Shall I go with you?

ALETHEA. No. (*she goes off R. LUCY looks after her very puzzled; then goes back to her sofa, and coils herself up again. JAMES comes in, with the MARQUIS*)

MARQUIS. (*hurriedly*) Ah, Lucy—where's Alethea?

LUCY. Will you tell her ladyship, James? She has just gone through to the nursery.

JAMES. Yes, my lady. (*crosses to R. He goes. The MARQUIS walks angrily up and down*)

LUCY. (*from her sofa*) It's all right with Hankey-Pankey, Papa.

MARQUIS. And who may Hankey-Pankey be?

LUCY. Your new son-in-law, Mr. Bannister.

MARQUIS. (*at head of settee*) What! Really! Already!

LUCY. He's head over heels. I'm expecting him now.

MARQUIS. (*beaming*) And you think that he——

LUCY. Oh yes. Alethea says it's too sudden.

MARQUIS. Not at all, not at all. That's very good. Admirable. I've made inquiries—he's enormously rich. I congratulate you, my child. (*he bends over her and kisses her*) Admirable. (*moving away c.*)

LUCY. Alethea suggests I should tell about Wilfred.

MARQUIS. Nonsense, nonsense! Wilfred! A boy and girl friendship! Wilfred belongs to the past, the skipping-rope age. Not a word about Wilfred!

LUCY. The poor boy'll be awfully cut up.

MARQUIS. Pooh, pooh! It's good training for boys. Oh, I'm very glad, very! You'll send Mr. Bannister to me, of course. I wish I had only had daughters!

LUCY. Anything fresh about Max, Papa? (*moving c.*)

MARQUIS. (*in sudden fury*) Max? Ah, Max! (*down L. and up*)

(ALETHEA comes in L. c.)

Alethea! What does this mean? (*LUCY changes her position in settee*)

ALETHEA. (c.) What, Papa?

MARQUIS. Don't you know?

ALETHEA. Why, what is there to know?

MARQUIS. (L. c.) He hasn't told you? Is it possible? You didn't know that Max is gone?

ALETHEA. Gone! Where?

MARQUIS. To ruin—perdition—to the devil! As for me, I cast him off—he is no longer a son of mine.

LUCY. Why, papa, what has he done?

MARQUIS. He has had the exquisite courtesy (ALETHEA *moves L.*) to inform me what he has done. He has *married* this— (LUCY *turns in settee*) Mer-ton woman.

ALETHEA. Max married!!

MARQUIS. And I am actually to understand that you didn't know?

LUCY. (*moves to R. end of settee, loses her poetry book*) She hasn't seen Jack yet——

MARQUIS. Yet? What do you mean?

LUCY. He slept at the Club last night. (*stops con-fused*)

MARQUIS. He slept at the Club! Since when do you allow your husband to sleep at the Club?

ALETHEA. (*confused*) I was playing Bridge at Lady Parchester's—he left a message with Lucy——

MARQUIS. (C.) Ah! I see that Mr. Frobisher and I must have an explanation on more points than one!

ALETHEA. (L. C.) You had better leave Jack alone. (*to audience*) I am sorry about Max, of course—but Jack has done what he thought right——

MARQUIS. (*thundering*) What he thought right! Listen to her! What Mr. Frobisher thought right! So I am to allow myself to be dictated to by this parvenu from the Australian backwoods! (*movement from ALETHEA. LUCY stops her*)

ALETHEA. That is not the way to speak of my husband.

MARQUIS. Not the way, by Gad! I will show him the way. Your husband yokes my son to—to this creature—and sends him to cut the wool off mangey sheep—and you stand by and approve! (*goes up to fire-place.*)

ALETHEA. I did what I could—I tried. But Jack felt very strongly——

MARQUIS (*moving R. and back to C. in delirious fal-setto*). Ha, ha, ha! Because of Mr. Frobisher's strong feeling my son must disgrace himself, and his name!

ALETHEA. Max is twenty-five, after all—

MARQUIS. He was helpless; he had no money. I left the affair in your hands. If a wife has not sufficient influence over her husband—

ALETHEA. Papa, I won't be worried like this. I told you I'd try; and I did try. But Jack's not a child—

MARQUIS (*raging*). No; he's a fool, an ass, an imbecile—

ALETHEA. I won't allow you to say such things. I won't stay here and have my husband abused. I'm going to baby. (*she goes, leaving the MARQUIS quite bewildered.*)

MARQUIS. What does this mean?

LUCY. I don't know. Something has happened.

MARQUIS. Rubbish! What can have happened?

LUCY. She has been very strange—I don't know—

MARQUIS. He must have bewitched her! Why, he sees with her eyes—he has always done what she told him. Well, we'll have a few words, he and I; and I venture to predict that Mr. Frobisher will wish that he had never been born! (*up to fireplace.*)

(*JAMES comes in.*)

JAMES. Mr. Bannister has called, my lady.

LUCY. Show him up, James. (*he goes.*)

MARQUIS. I had better go—it would look rather marked if he found me here. I can get to the nursery through the billiard room, can't I?

LUCY. Yes.

MARQUIS. Very well, then—I'll go to Alethea—and come back later, for a little talk with my friend Frobisher. Good luck to you, my child! (*he goes R. C.*)

(*LUCY sits in settee. Pause. After a moment JAMES comes in with HANKEY BANNISTER.*)

JAMES. Mr. Bannister. (*he goes.*) (*bus. for book, LUCY.*)

LUCY. How do you do? (*they shake hands.*) Won't you sit down?

HANKEY (*sitting*). Thank you. Have I disturbed you? You were reading?

LUCY. Yes. Tennyson.

HANKEY (*places chair c. and sits*). Ah! Tennyson. Yes, I know—he was a poet. You are fond of poetry?

LUCY. Oh yes!

HANKEY (*with a sigh*). I mean to be, you know—in time. But at present I'm a shockingly ignorant person. You mustn't despise me for it.

LUCY. Despise you! Why do you persist in depreciating yourself?

HANKEY. You see, I know nothing of the kind of things that people here know and talk about. I've read no books to speak of. I went out to Australia when I was a nipper; I had only been at school for a couple of years. Everyone here's most awfully clever. The only thing I know is the earth.

LUCY. The earth?

HANKEY. When you've lived in the open, you see, as I've done, these great many years—digging and digging and praying the earth to be kind, and help you—why, you get to know one another, as it were—you're no longer a stranger.

LUCY. Mother earth, the poets all call her.

HANKEY (*smiling*). Yes—and she was a hard mother to me—until eighteen months ago. Oh, I shall never forget that day! I had lost my nerve—I had been alone for so long—cold and hungry, drenched to the skin—it hadn't stopped raining for weeks. And the ravens seemed to be drawing nearer and nearer. And I lay in my tent there, and cried like a fool, and prayed—to the earth, you know—I was almost a pagan. And—you won't believe it, perhaps, but it's true—almost that very moment the rain stopped and the sun came out, and I set to work—I dug on the very spot I had been kneeling—and I turned up a nugget! A nugget of virgin gold!

LUCY. Really!

HANKEY (*nodding*). She had heard my prayers, and was sorry. I call it the Good Earth Mine.

LUCY (*smiling*). So you see you're a bit of a poet yourself.

HANKEY. There are not many men would say *that* of me! But we all have a side—don't you think—that we show, just once in a lifetime . . . Would it take long, Lady Lucy, d'you fancy, to lick a rough creature like me into shape?

LUCY. I don't know that you need it. The men I meet can't speak of the earth.

HANKEY. Ah, they've got the ways, you see—they know how to do things. I'm only a lubber. But I mean to try very hard.

LUCY. You'll soon pick up the outside veneer and polish.

HANKEY. That's it,—I'm only rough wood—a bit of stout ash, that's been exposed to all weathers; but though it's gnarled and ugly, it'll stand a strain better than mahogany. It's the stuff to build bridges of.

LUCY. That's a pretty idea. . . .

HANKEY. (*eagerly*) And you think we two could be friends, Lady Lucy?

LUCY. I fancy we're that already.

HANKEY. You mean it?

LUCY. Oh yes, I'm not a doll—I know a man when I see one.

HANKEY. (*moves chair*) Yes, you could go tiger-hunting with me—I'll say that. I'm staunch—it's not much to brag about—but it's all I've got.

LUCY. It's a good deal.

HANKEY. I'm not a gentleman, worse luck—and I guess it's presumption in me—but Jack must have been much the same when he first came over?

LUCY. Oh yes, just the same.

HANKEY. Well, he's picked up the lingo, hasn't he? He speaks like a duke, he does—he's got the stand-offish manner. When I knew him out there, he was just

a rough chap like me—though that's a good many years ago. But I tell you, Lady Lucy—

(JACK comes in L.)

LUCY. Ah, Jack!

HANKEY. Cuss!

JACK. Good afternoon, Lucy. How are you, Jim. (*crossing R. to table*).

LUCY. (*rises and puts her arm through JACK's*) We were just speaking of you. By the way, papa's been here. He's very angry with you.

JACK. Really? (*disengaging her arm*)

LUCY. Yes. About Max and Miss Merton. I'm very pleased myself—I like her. Papa says that when he's finished with you, you'll wish you had never been born!

JACK. (*carelessly*) You alarm me (*sits at table*).

LUCY. (*rising*) That's what you call his stand-offish manner isn't it, Mr. Bannister? I'll tell Alethea you're here, Jack. (*she goes to the door R. C.*)

HANKEY. (*eagerly*) Shall I see you before I go, Lady Lucy?

LUCY. Oh, yes, if you wish it. I shall be on the premises. (*she goes off R. C.*)

HANKEY. Jack, old pal, Jack! I think it's all right!

JACK. What's all right?

HANKEY. What! *It!* Say a kind word to a fellow! I believe that she'll have me. Confound you, if you hadn't come in just then—

JACK. You'd have proposed?

HANKEY. That's so—I would (*laugh*) and I will too, (*laugh*) before I leave this house (*moving L.*)

JACK. Mad Jim, Mad Jim! You only met her two days ago.

HANKEY. I know her as well as I should in twenty years. I'm an old miner—I can tell gold when I see it, first time.

JACK. (*rise, after a moment's silence and meditation*) Look here, you've done one or two things for me, in my time, that I haven't forgotten. When I had the bush fever, you stuck by me, or I shouldn't be here. And the question is now—what ought I to do? (*goes up to fireplace*).

HANKEY. Do? (*pause*) What do you mean? (*following JACK*).

JACK. You're in love with Lucy?

HANKEY. (*sturdily*) Yes, I am.

JACK. And you think she loves you?

HANKEY. She likes me, I know—and the rest will come. Oh, I'll make a good husband! I'll only live for her. (*moving down, HANKEY turns*).

—JACK. That's just it—you'd do what I did. Damn it, look here—we're a couple of men, we two, and not mere snivelling idiots. Anyone else I wouldn't care—I'd say it wasn't my business. But you—well, with you it's different.

HANKEY. If you've anything to say, say it out. I can stand it.

JACK. When a girl who's been brought up as she's been brought up marries a man from a mining camp, she marries him for his money.

HANKEY. Lucy wouldn't—she's not that sort.

JACK. Bah!

HANKEY. You were the same as me when her sister married you—

JACK. Yes, I was—that's just it. And . . . well—look here: Lucy's twenty-one. D'you think a girl reaches that age without falling in love?

HANKEY. She's had her flirtations, no doubt.

JACK. Oh yes, they don't count. But she *was* in love—is to this day—with her cousin, Wilfred Renton (*movement from HANKEY*). Oh yes, he's only an amiable ass, of the pretty kind, and it may be mere boy and girl nonsense, and all that; but if he had a few thousands a year she'd take him to-morrow, and it's right you should know.

HANKEY. In love with her cousin?

JACK. I've told you. Of the depth of her feeling I've of course no idea. *Have* women like her any deep feeling? I don't know. But there it is.

HANKEY. I've been a fool.

JACK. I was just such another—but I had no friend to tell me. You're tremendously rich—a great catch—and her noble father is poor. I feel a bit of a brute at giving the girl away, but you'd hear it from twenty people—the thing isn't a secret.

HANKEY. And you believe that she'd marry me . . . notwithstanding?

JACK. In this set they think a great deal of money.

HANKEY. (*touches JACK's arm*) Her sister loved you.

JACK. (*pauses*) I should have held my tongue, very likely, if my marriage had turned out well. (*turns*) I was ass enough to believe that I had been married for love. That illusion didn't last long—I don't think it to-day.

HANKEY. . . . In love with her cousin!

JACK. Ask her yourself—tell her just what I've said. Mind you, she's a very sweet girl. She's frivolous, of course—she lives on the surface of things—and God only knows whether she ever yet really has learned what the word love truly means! Still, there it is—and you know what you ought to know. The rest just concerns yourself. (*HANKEY crosses R. Pause. JACK crosses to him; there is silence. HANKEY staring before him. JAMES comes in, goes to JACK and whispers in his ear*)

JAMES. Mr. Dallas has called—sir, he is writing a letter to her Ladyship.

JACK. Ah, very well . . . when he's done, say I particularly want to see him. (*servant turns to go*) And bring up the letter, too. You understand?

JAMES. Yes, sir. (*exits*)

HANKEY. Dallas, Lady Westerby's brother?

JACK. (*goes to HANKEY*) That's the best thing

about him ! Jim, I want your help. There's the devil unchained in me to-day, and I don't want to throttle the man. So you stand by.

HANKEY. What has he done ?

JACK. He'll tell us what he has done !

(FOOTMAN enters. *There is a moment's wait, then SIMPSON comes in with DALLAS, whom he announces. FOOTMAN and SIMPSON go*)

DALLAS. (*vaguely surprised*) Ah, how d'you do ? . . . You wanted to speak to me ?

JACK. Yes. Let me introduce you—Mr. Dallas—Mr. Bannister. (*they bow stiffly, HANKEY goes up. Enter JAMES with letter, which he hands to JACK and then goes*)

DALLAS. Sorry to find Lady Alethea's out—I've just written a line to her.

JACK. Ah !

DALLAS. You'll see that it's given to her, won't you ?

JACK. Oh yes—I'll give it myself.

DALLAS. Thanks. (*pause*) Er—you all right ?

JACK. Quite. And you ?

DALLAS. A bit fagged—late hours are telling. You going to Ascot ?

JACK. I don't think so. By the way, touching this letter——

DALLAS. The letter ?

JACK. Yes, I'm rather curious to know what you've written.

DALLAS. What ! You don't mean to open it !

JACK. Oh, no. But you will.

DALLAS. What !!!

JACK. You'll be good enough to read to me what you have written.

DALLAS. (*forcing a laugh*) Do you do me the honour to be jealous ?

JACK. I'm rather in a hurry.

DALLAS. My dear chap——

JACK. Quite so—open the envelope, please. (*he hands him the letter*)

(DALLAS makes a swift movement as though to tear it; JACK seizes him by the wrist; HANKEY moves down slightly to L. of DALLAS.)

JACK. All right, Jim. Look here, I'm a bit of a savage—but (*releases DALLAS' hand*) you'd better read me that letter.

DALLAS. I've not the slightest objection. (*slowly opens the envelope*) Don't you think this person might withdraw? Or do you keep him here for your protection?

JACK. No. For yours.

DALLAS. That's exceedingly kind of you. (*he begins to read. HANKEY stands behind him*)

DALLAS. "Dear Lady Alethea"——

HANKEY. I don't see the "Lady." (JACK and DALLAS turn sharply.)

DALLAS. "We're very old friends—I hope you'll——"

JACK. Read it, Jim. (HANKEY takes letter)

HANKEY. "I hope you will forgive what I said to you yesterday. I must have been mad, but I am glad that you know. Harry."

JACK. (*to HANKEY*) Thank you, Jim. Put it on the table. (*he turns to DALLAS*) Mr. Dallas, you can go.

DALLAS. Before I go, I must——

JACK. You can go. I have to remember that you're in my house. (*for a moment they stand face to face; DALLAS suddenly swings on his heel and goes*)

HANKEY. By Jove, that man's in luck! I'm afraid I should have had a go at him——

JACK. If we had been in Queensland!

HANKEY. His letter at least clears your wife—(*goes to him*)

JACK. (R. C.) Clears her! Do you think I ever

doubted her? No, no, no. But that's what it is, you see; that frog is allowed to call her by her Christian name, to speak of his filthy love. It's for garbage like Dallas that everything else is shelved. For creatures like him! (JACK *sits at table*)

(*The MARQUIS comes in*)

MARQUIS. Ah, my dear Mr. Bannister, I'm delighted to see you. How are you? (*shakes hands*) Don't let me drive you away.

HANKEY. I was just going, my lord.

MARQUIS. You will find the ladies, or at least one of them, in the drawing-room.

HANKEY. I've a little business that I'm afraid I must attend to. Good afternoon, my lord. (*he goes abruptly*)

MARQUIS. Why, what's the matter with him?

JACK. Won't you sit down? (*motions him to sit*)

MARQUIS. What I have to say to you, sir, I would rather say standing. I am anxious to know whether it is a fact that my son has been married to-day?

JACK. Oh yes—by special license. I have lent the young couple my yacht for their honeymoon.

MARQUIS. Indeed?

JACK. The witnesses were Lady Westerby and myself; and you will be pleased to hear that the bride looked very handsome.

MARQUIS. That, of course, is most satisfactory. And you considered the consent of the parents, of the family, a mere trifle that might be entirely dispensed with?

JACK. Under the circumstances, I did venture so to consider.

MARQUIS. Admirable. Mr. Frobisher, I am under an obligation to you for one or two loans, which I hope to be able promptly to discharge——

JACK. At your convenience.

MARQUIS. But I should be failing in my duty did I

not take the earliest possible opportunity of informing you that your conduct in this affair has been of the last imbecility ; of a dishonest stupidity so outrageous as to be scarcely conceivable in a chimpanzee. I would tell you further, sir——

JACK. (*rises*) You have a fine flow of eloquence, Lord Steventon, and have, on more than one occasion, favoured me at great length with your opinion on my behaviour. With your consent I propose to enlighten you as to what I think of your own.

MARQUIS. There is a difference between our stations, sir, that would render any such attempt indecent and impertinent.

JACK. I will run that risk. And though I am fully conscious of the exalted position you adorn, I will tell you that your action, in turning this innocent girl out of doors, disgraced, helpless, and friendless, was dastardly and criminal——

MARQUIS. (*trembling with passion*) Sir !!

JACK. And that your son, in marrying the woman he loves, and has wronged, makes no *mésalliance*, but acts like an honest gentleman——

MARQUIS. I am not here to receive a sermon from you, sir.

JACK. No ; you expected to find me humble beneath your reproach. Those days are over. You have at least the satisfaction of knowing that your son is married to a very charming girl——

MARQUIS. Who is a stain on the family honour !

JACK. It seems to me that the less we say of the family honour the better.

MARQUIS. What !

JACK. Let the family honour turn honest, and it will rejoice at Lord Drayton's marriage——

MARQUIS. By Gad, sir !!

JACK. Believe me, Lord Steventon, the heir to your title will be far better employed earning his livelihood in Australia than sponging at home on snobs and parvenus !

(*Enter JAMES.*)

JAMES. Beg pardon sir, Mr. Peters is here, and says you want to see him at once.

JACK. Let him wait.

MARQUIS. Oh no—he can come—I am going!

(*Exit JAMES.*)

MARQUIS. And in the future, I beg you to understand that I have not the honour of your acquaintance.

JACK. That will be as you wish.

MARQUIS. But, one last word—if, in your composition, you possessed one grain of gentlemanly feeling—

JACK. I should probably have been content to let Miss Merton be thrown, penniless, upon the streets of London. She, at least, is the gainer by my not being a gentleman!

(*The MARQUIS turns on his heel, and goes without a word. Enter PETERS.*)

PETERS. Good morning, sir—I'm sorry I'm late—I came the moment I received your wire—

JACK. That's all right, Peters. I'm going back to Queensland—

PETERS. Sir!!!

JACK. And I want you to put all my property here on the market—this place, the house in Sussex, and the rest. You understand—

(*Enter ALETHEA.*)

PETERS. Everything, sir? Furniture—(*sees LADY ALETHEA*) Dear me! I'm—very well, sir—I'll see to it at once. And when could possession be given?

JACK. Say in a fortnight.

PETERS. A fortnight, sir?

JACK. Yes. So you'll lose no time. Good morning Peters! (*moves to table R.*)

(*PETERS has bowed to ALETHEA; he stands a moment irresolute; then goes.*)

ALETHEA. Why, Jack, what does this mean?

JACK. It means that we are going to Queensland by the next boat.

ALETHEA. (c.) To Queensland!

JACK. Yes. You and Archie and I.

ALETHEA. I don't understand—

JACK. (*quietly*) What is there to understand? The thing's very simple. By the way, there's a letter for you on the table.

ALETHEA. For me? (*moves to table L. c.*)

JACK. Yes. Mr. Dallas brought it.

ALETHEA. (*taking the letter*) It has been opened—

JACK. He was good enough to open it himself, and read me what he had written.

(*Pause*)

ALETHEA. (*with a quick look at him*) Ah—(*she reads the letter, tears it up scornfully and throws it away*) Jack, when you came in yesterday—

JACK. We needn't refer to that—

ALETHEA. (*eagerly*) But we must! I'm afraid you thought—I don't know what you thought. I admit I was wrong about—that person. I have of course not the slightest desire ever to see him again. But that doesn't excuse your giving instructions to the servants—

JACK. You must pardon me if I regard it as an ample excuse.

ALETHEA. Why? You might have left that to me. Mr. Dallas so far, had never led me to expect—

JACK. I told you what sort of man he was, and you wouldn't believe me.

ALETHEA. I was wrong, I admit. But in future—

JACK. They don't breed men of his type in Queensland.

ALETHEA. Queensland! Why do you harp upon Queensland? You're not seriously asking me to go there?

JACK. Oh yes; very seriously, I assure you.

ALETHEA. (*gently*) Jack, Jack, this is absurd! I was as indignant yesterday as you could have been; and I assure you it has taught me a lesson. In future...

JACK. It's too late for that now.

ALETHEA. Too late! But, good Heavens, what have I done, after all? You talk of dragging me away, shutting me in a desert! Why?

JACK. The wife must go with her husband (*moving away*.)

ALETHEA. I've had to remind you before that I'm not a mere chattel of yours (*moving away from him*).

JACK. Yes; you've told me that more than once. (*pause and turns*.)

ALETHEA. (*with persuasion in her voice*) I can understand, of course, that you should be vexed—but you really are—much angrier—than you've any reason to be—You don't think I cared about Dallas, or want to see him again? Come, let's be friends... (*she goes to him as though to kiss him; he waves her back, turns to his desk, sits, and takes up some papers*.)

ALETHEA. You won't? Why, don't you see how silly you've been? You've kept away from me ever since this happened. You slept at the Club last night—and that wasn't a nice thing to do—now was it? I couldn't believe that you really were not coming home—I stayed up a long time—I meant to tell you everything. I didn't go to bed till past three—and then I couldn't sleep—Oh, it was unkind of you—yes, it was—very—You stay away, and brood over things, and work yourself into a passion. Why? Don't you think I was angry? I told James myself to-day that I wouldn't see that tiresome man any more. Oh, don't look so fiercely at me, as though you were Othello and I Desdemona! Come, let's be friends (*he turns and looks at her*). What more can I do? Do you want me to go on my knees?—I'm not used to pleading...

JACK. (*grimly*) I haven't asked you to plead.

ALETHEA. (*mildly reproachful*) This is scarcely what I should have expected of you . . .

JACK. No. I realise that. But things have changed, you see. I've endured a great deal, day after day. Now the end has come.

ALETHEA. (*wondering*) The end?

JACK. Yes.

ALETHEA. I don't know what you mean?

JACK. I would rather not say any more.

ALETHEA. But you must—we must have this out—What instructions have you given to Peters?

JACK. To sell the lease of this house, and all that is in it.

ALETHEA. What? He may not have gone yet—perhaps we can stop him. (*She runs to the bell—JACK laughs out loud: she turns and faces him.*)

ALETHEA. You laugh? (*turns.*)

JACK. It's too late for things to be stopped.

ALETHEA. Because of Mr. Dallas?

JACK. (*banging his fist on the desk*) Oh, not Dallas alone. He was the last straw, that's all. It's the friends you have, and the life you lead, and the opinions you hold—it's time there should be a change.

ALETHEA. I don't know what you mean.

JACK. (*with growing vehemence*) I've had enough of these companions of yours, these wretched, sexless women who do nothing but flirt and gamble, these childless wives, who grudge the time that it costs them to bring a baby into the world. I've had enough of their brainless, indecent talk, where everything good is turned into ridicule, and each word has a double meaning. I've had enough of this existence of ours, in town and country, where all the men make love to their neighbours' wives. I've done with it—done with it all—and so have you.

ALETHEA. (*rise—pale to the lips*) You exaggerate grossly.

JACK. Exaggerate! Haven't I had to stand by and see it all, year after year! Oh yes, we've lived in

a very smart set, and I dare say there've been one or two more who respected the seventh commandment, and merely played with fire (*ALETHEA turns away up stage to fireplace*). And most husbands, no doubt, are content that their wives should neglect them, as you have neglected me—never give them a thought, have no time to look after their child—

ALETHEA (*indignantly*). That's not true! (*turns round*.)

JACK. Isn't it? There's our boy upstairs—you allowed a strange woman to give him her milk, so that you could play Bridge, and go dancing. You see him a few minutes each day—you've so much to do!

ALETHEA. Do you think I don't love my child?

JACK. You love him as you love me—for half an hour out of the twenty-four; and the rest of the time we don't count (*moves to table*).

ALETHEA (*wringing her hands*) Oh, how can you say such things! (*comes down*)

JACK. As for me—the schemes I've at heart—my hopes and ambitions—it's a long time now that I've never dared speak of them. I've been poor, foolish Jack, who didn't play cards, or waltz; I was dull and a bore. But the first fop who came along, the first smirking dandy, who could whisper and ogle and tell you a tit-bit of scandal, he was amusing, and pleasant. He thought it right that you should lose hundreds at cards, spend a fortune on dress, and fritter your time on all sorts of foolishness (*turns away*). Your brother seduces a girl—you are indignant with me because I befriend her. The people around you—the poor, the helpless, the sick—to these you give never a thought. You're a peer's daughter, sent into the world to enjoy yourself, have a good time, with Dallases round to flirt with. It's been pleasure, pleasure, pleasure, from morning till night, from one year's end to another. You and your friends forget for what purpose God made you, and turn to mere empty dolls. Well, I say, to Hell with all this! You're my wife, not my mistress;

I married because I wanted a mate and a partner, and I'm tired of the life we've led, in which you've been neither. And so we'll go, we two: we'll leave this rotten West End; we'll go back to Nature, and start things over again!

ALETHEA (*defiant*). I will not.

JACK. You won't?

ALETHEA. No, I won't. You have said things to me I will never forget. (*pause*) Why did I marry you, do you think?

JACK. Why? For my money.

ALETHEA. (*with a cry of pain*) Oh!

JACK. You knew Dallas before, you'd have married him if he had been rich. If I died to-morrow he'd be your next husband—

ALETHEA. Oh!

JACK. He or his like.

ALETHEA. (*slowly*) So that's what you think of me!

JACK. Yes; and it's true! You pretended to love me, in the first few days; but all that very soon wore off. You married me for my money—and God knows I've paid the price!

(*Silence.*)

ALETHEA. (*feverishly excited*) Very well, then—if you go to Queensland, you go alone.

JACK. You refuse to come with me?

ALETHEA. Yes; I refuse, I refuse! Oh, Lucy, where's Lucy? I'll go home. I'll go back with her—I won't stay with you any more—(*up stage.*)

JACK. You won't come?

ALETHEA. (*up*) Oh never, never, never! (*she has been at the door, and has called to LUCY who now comes in, arm in arm with HANKEY. ALETHEA rushes to her, and drags her away.*)

ALETHEA. Lucy, Lucy, come with me, come!

LUCY. (*amazed*) Why, Ally!

ALETHEA. Come!

(*ALETHEA and LUCY go—HANKEY stares after them ;
and at JACK, who for a moment says nothing.*)

JACK (*grimly*). You and Lucy—?

HANKEY. Yes—she has told me everything—

JACK. Quite so. Well, you wanted a house like this, and the rest—You'd better take them—

HANKEY. Why—what has happened?

JACK. I'm going to Queensland. (*he rings.*)

HANKEY. And your wife?

JACK (*sitting at his desk, with his back turned*). My wife stays here.

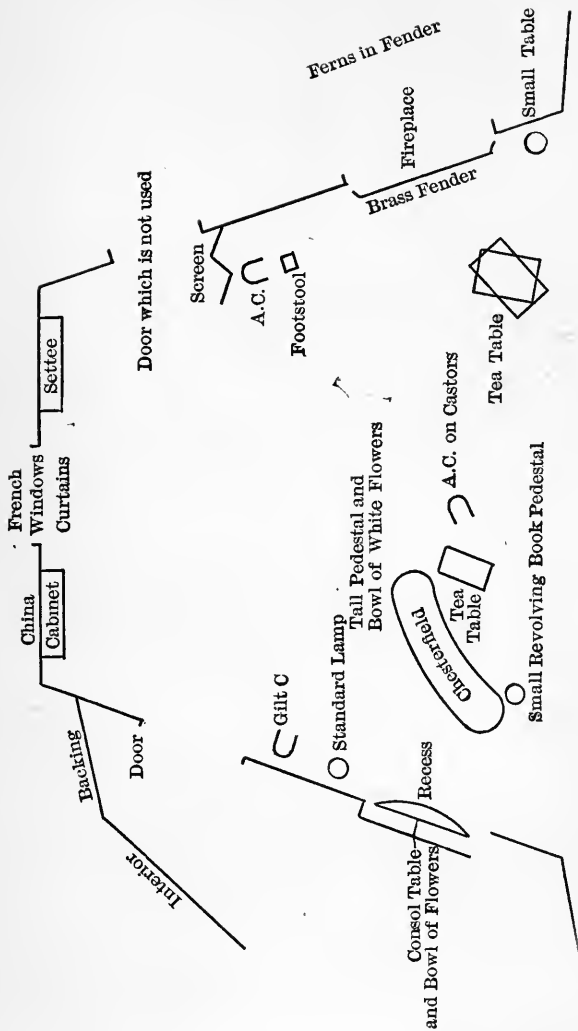
(*When HANKEY's face turns*)

CURTAIN.

PICTURE.

(*HANKEY leaning over JACK.*)

ACT. 4 Drawing Room
GARDEN BACKING



ACT IV.

LADY WESTERBY'S *drawing-room. Ten days have elapsed since the last act.* LADY WESTERBY, LADY PARCHESTER and TINY are seated, dallying with tea-cups. HANNAFORD stands behind tea-table. TINY in chair, C. LADY WESTERBY in L. end of settee. LADY PARCHESTER in R. end of settee.

HANNAFORD. (*standing*) Well, ladies, I as a philosopher, surveying mankind from some slight elevation, I say it is well done.

TINY. Oh, Mr. Hannaford!

HANNAFORD. The Australian returns to Australia, and the days of the Colonial Exhibition are over. Frobisher goes, but the fair Alethea remains to gladden our eyes, and her noble father has a new bannister to lean on.

TINY. I forgive the pun, but wince none the less. I wanted Mr. Bannister for myself.

HANNAFORD. Miss Mornington, you make me constantly regret that I have not ten thousand a year.

TINY. With an epigrammatic husband I should require more than that.

HANNAFORD. Believe me, were I very rich, I should be as dull as a statesman. I scintillate because I am poor. I shine in the dark.

LADY PARCHESTER. Marry him, Tiny. On foggy days you can switch on Mr. Hannaford.

HANNAFORD. Miss Mornington seeks a rich husband, and I a rich wife. We adore each other, but propose only to marry after the decease of our first partners. (*moves to TINY*)

LADY PARCHESTER. A post-mortem engagement. You'd make a delicious couple. I'd love to see it.

HANNAFORD. (*has got L. of TINY*) By the way, I

met Lord Parchester in Bond Street, yesterday, dreamily gazing into a diamond shop. Is your Ladyship contemplating a new tiara?

LADY PARCHESTER. I have a . . . morganatic relation who, I believe, has tastes that way.

HANNAFORD. Ah! One can scarcely call her your sister-in-law. The kinship is obscure.

LADY PARCHESTER. That also, like your wit, shines in the dark. Oh, lucky Alethea!

HANNAFORD. The Australian, I hear, has made most handsome settlements. Lord Steventon beams. (*takes TINY'S cup; rises*)

TINY. It's hard on Alethea that the boy should be taken away. I call it brutal.

HANNAFORD. The brutality of the male is the last survival of primitive honesty.

TINY. (*crosses L.*) I fancy I've heard that before.

HANNAFORD. Miss Mornington, believe me, I'm always original. The only plagiarism I can see myself committing would be to marry a widow.

TINY. (*sits on pouffe*) Why does Alethea shut herself up like this? Why won't she see me?

LADY PARCHESTER. It was indecent of old Steevy to admit the whole town into his confidence.

HANNAFORD. How he hates Frobisher! (*moving c., puts cup down*) You know, when you think of it, this revolt of the son-in-law against Recognized Institutions is very comic. I imagine he thought that when he raised his voice—Miss Mornington, doesn't the Bible speak of a trumpeting gentleman who knocked over walls?

TINY. "When the priests blew with the trumpets, the walls of Jericho fell down flat."

HANNAFORD. It is evident that Jericho was jerry-built. Our walls are more substantial.

LADY PARCHESTER. It is a fact, I suppose, that Mr. Bannister has taken over the house, and the rest?

LADY WESTERBY. Yes.

TINY. Well, as for me, I'm ultra-modern, of course,

and all that—but I like Alethea, and I like her husband, and I think this separation is quite ridiculous.

HANNAFORD. This punctiliousness is a throw-back to your father the Bishop.

TINY. (*crosses HANNAFORD to c.*) I've a great respect for Jack Frobisher; and if I were his wife I'd follow him to the world's end.

HANNAFORD. (*in TINY's ear*) There is a public-house of that name in Fulham.

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, Mr. Hannaford, Mr. Hannaford, one would like to believe, for once, that you had a heart, and not only a jest-box, inside you!

HANNAFORD. (*moving to pouffe ottoman*) A heart! Why, I was brought up to be emotional, with a view to the Church, or the Poet Laureateship. (*all laugh*) When I was seven I recited "Billy's Rose." I shall go down to posterity as "Good-hearted Hannaford." (*moving to fireplace*)

TINY. I do wish Alethea would let me see her.

LADY WESTERBY. She's very fond of you, I will tell her. But at present——

LADY PARCHESTER. Don't let her make too much of a trifle. It's our misfortune that we have to marry for money. But there is much to be said for a husband *in partibus*——

HANNAFORD. (*moves c.*) And a wife in Mayfair. Yes, that is the ideal. And as long as the husband remains *in partibus*, and does not look into jeweller's shops——

LADY PARCHESTER. (*rising*) Mr. Hannaford, the subject is distasteful to me——

HANNAFORD. Ten thousand apologies. And I promise you I will rate Lord Parchester soundly.

LADY PARCHESTER. Goodbye, Lady Westerby. Please give Alethea my love, and tell her to let me know if I can do anything for her. Good-bye, Tiny. (*LADY WESTERBY goes to bell. HANNAFORD opens the door. LADY PARCHESTER bows stiffly to LADY WESTERBY and goes.*)

HANNAFORD. (*coming c.*) Marvellous creatures, women! Who could have imagined that she would be so annoyed? Her husband's vagaries have long been a standing jest between us.

TINY. (*at head of settee*) I believe this last infatuation of his has nearly ruined them. (LADY WESTERBY *sits on pouffe*)

HANNAFORD. He should be locked up. The infatuation speaks through her nose, and is nearly as old as he. Good-bye, Lady Westerby; I will go after the lady and try to make my peace. Miss Mornington, if an American uncle should die, and leave me his money— (LADY WESTERBY *rings bell. Sits in chair above fire*)

TINY. Then I shall be pleased to marry you (HANNAFORD *kisses her hand*) on your condition.

HANNAFORD. Which is?

TINY. You *in partibus*, and I in Mayfair.

HANNAFORD. Oh! Good-bye. . . . (*he goes R. off.*)
LADY WESTERBY *in chair L. C.*)

TINY. For once he had no answer ready— (*rises and goes to LADY WESTERBY*) He's a hateful creature—one sees one's own vices distorted. Do tell me about Alethea. (*at fireplace*)

LADY WESTERBY. My dear, there's nothing to tell.

TINY. She's very fond of her husband—why does she let him go?

LADY WESTERBY. Lord Steventon has told you—he has told everyone.

TINY. Mr. Frobisher suddenly made up his mind to return to Queensland—they had a violent quarrel—she left the house and has not seen him since?

LADY WESTERBY. (*with a deep sigh*) Yes.

TINY. And when does he sail?

LADY WESTERBY. To-morrow.

TINY. To-morrow? She has been here?

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, yes. Every day.

TINY. And can you do nothing?

LADY WESTERBY. Nothing at all. Her father keeps

them apart, and inflames her anger. I am quite helpless.

(*The servant comes in with HANKEY. Up R.*)

MARY. Mr. Bannister. (*she goes. LADY WESTERBY rises, shakes hands with HANKEY then sits in settee R.*)

HANKEY. How do you do, Lady Westerby? Good afternoon, Miss Mornington.

TINY. (*sitting on arm of chair*) Well, Mr. Bannister, most fortunate of men! Haven't you brought Lucy with you?

HANKEY. She's with the milliners and dressmakers. They've settled on her like flies.

TINY. The trousseau! The loveliest word in the language. It conjures up visions of beautiful frocks, and exquisite laces, and chiffons. I'm going to be bridesmaid, you know.

HANKEY. So I hear.

TINY. A little more enthusiasm, please. I understudy the bride. And if, at the last moment, she should say no, I, as the eldest bridesmaid, am expected to take her place.

HANKEY. Oh!

TINY. (*rise and goes to mantelpiece*) The exclamation's not very gallant. What are you going to give us?

HANKEY. A brooch, I believe.

TINY. Ah, the usual thing—pearls and diamonds, with interlaced monogram. I've a whole collection; and when I look at them, I feel like the man who wants to play Hamlet, and is always cast for the ghost. Good-bye, Lady Westerby. You'll tell Alethea? (*HANKEY moves to door R.*)

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, yes. (*rise, crosses, rings bell*)

TINY. I'm so anxious to see her. My love to Lucy, Mr. Bannister. Are you learning Bridge?

HANKEY. Lucy is.

TINY. And you?

HANKEY. Oh, I've so much to learn!

TINY. That's true. (*crosses to door*) But if I were

you I'd teach instead. That's very cryptic, isn't it? Good-bye. (LADY WESTERBY *moves R. She goes off R.*)

HANKEY. What does she mean? (LADY WESTERBY *sits in settee*)

LADY WESTERBY. She's a wild, irresponsible creature, but with a very good heart. Well, have you any news?

HANKEY. (C) None.

LADY WESTERBY. You told Mr. Frobisher how hurt I was that he hadn't been here?

HANKEY. Yes. But he's been so frightfully busy—all his East-end affairs to settle. (*sitting in chair c*)

LADY WESTERBY. He knows that I called?

HANKEY. Yes. And he says he will come, if he can find time. But I don't fancy he will.

LADY WESTERBY. Why?

HANKEY. He can guess, of course, what you would say to him.

LADY WESTERBY. And then?

HANKEY. Why, he won't even let *me*! He stops me at once. I've tried often enough, God knows!

LADY WESTERBY. How is he?

HANKEY. He's all right—but he's like what he was, out in Queensland, when there was a row on. There's a look on his face that I haven't forgotten—and when it was there folks thought it best to leave Jack Frobisher alone.

LADY WESTERBY. Such old friends as you two—

HANKEY. Oh, you can be sure that I've done what I could—but Jack's got a way, when he sets his jaw square—

LADY WESTERBY. Oh yes, I know—you men are like that. You think that it's big, and magnificent, to make up your mind, and stick to it, rigidly. You let women have their own way, for years, and then suddenly want to drag them by the hair.

HANKEY. I don't think Jack's to blame.

LADY WESTERBY. Of course you don't—what man would? And I don't blame—I only lament.

HANKEY. I like Alethea—she can't hold a candle to Lucy, of course—but still—

LADY WESTERBY. If we could only have brought them together!

HANKEY. It would have been of no use—Alethea's mad with him. She hates him, she says.

LADY WESTERBY. As though it mattered what a woman says when she's angry!

HANKEY. I told Jack the child had been here every day—he didn't seem to know.

LADY WESTERBY. What! The nurse said nothing?

HANKEY. No. He seemed surprised.

LADY WESTERBY. Surprised! What did he think? See, they've been married three years, and what do they know of each other? Ah well, there it is. Tell me of yourself. You're very happy of course?

HANKEY. Lucy's an angel—but there's a crumpled roseleaf.

LADY WESTERBY. His Lordship?

HANKEY. Yes. He's disgustingly healthy.

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, he'll live to a hundred!

HANKEY. Don't be unkind.... There's a tribe I know of where it's considered bad form for a man ever to see his parents-in-law after the wedding.

LADY WESTERBY. How very uncivilised!

HANKEY. It had its points.

LADY WESTERBY. Well, let us hope your marriage will turn out more happily.

HANKEY. Oh, Lucy's quite a different sort of girl. She has ideals.

LADY WESTERBY. Poor Alethea! This is a case where one longed for a fever, an accident. Here they are, these two—both of them slaves to their obstinate pride—

HANKEY. That's it, of course—pride's at the bottom. But I don't suppose Alethea can really have loved him.

LADY WESTERBY. You foolish man! She adores him!

HANKEY. Then why—

LADY WESTERBY. *Because* she adores him! If he made a sign she'd fall into his arms. But her father (*rise*) has kept them apart, and carefully plays on her pride. She has been here, day after day; and I tell her, soon they'll be gone, your husband and child, and she cries, and cries—but when I beg her to go to him, write him a word, she talks of her... self-respect! Her self-respect! And with him it's the same—Oh, I tell you it makes me—(*The door opens and MARY comes in with JACK and announces MR. FROBISHER. LADY WESTERBY jumps up and goes to him with outstretched hands.*)

LADY WESTERBY. (*gladly*) Mr. Frobisher! (*MARY goes*).

(HANKEY *rises and goes L.*)

JACK. (C.) How do you do, Lady Westerby? Jim, I thought I might find you here. I've a job for you—do you mind?

HANKEY. Of course not—what is it?

JACK. I've just had a wire—the doctor I had engaged can't come: his wife's fallen ill. I have another, but want to enquire about him. He refers me to Sir Benjamin Harrison, of 65 Harley Street. Could you go there for me? You'd find him in now.

HANKEY. I'll go at once. What's the man's name?

JACK. Blidstone. Here's his letter. It's awfully good of you, Jim.

HANKEY. Nonsense. Good-bye, Lady Westerby. See you later, Jack.

(LADY WESTERBY *crosses L.*)

LADY WESTERBY. You have engaged a doctor?

JACK. In case Archie should fall ill on the voyage. It's a long trip for the little man.

LADY WESTERBY. Yes. (*sitting on pouffe L.*)

JACK. Lady Westerby, I feel that I owe you an ex-

planation, and an apology. You were good enough to call on me; and you must have thought me a boor not to return your visit.

LADY WESTERBY. I was a trifle hurt....

JACK. But you will have understood. This has been a case in which a man had to act for himself—and no intervention was possible—not even yours.

LADY WESTERBY. May I say it? I am a little..... disappointed in you....

JACK. I suppose that is inevitable. But I am sorry, for I value your good opinion.

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, Mr. Frobisher, is it quite worthy of you to.... fly!

JACK. You can call it that, of course. To you Australia means exile—to me it is home. Here I am merely a loafer—there I shall work. And see—let me make myself clear. When I asked my wife to go with me, it was not my intention to stay there for ever; we should have remained for a couple of years, have mixed with real men and women: she would have learned the true meaning of life. And then we would have come back together, to this cruel city, and perhaps have done something here. Whereas, if I did not go, or fly, as you call it, within six weeks things would be as they were. Alethea would return to me, no doubt—but how long would it be before her friends gathered round her, before the old life began again? Our only salvation lay in a radical change.

LADY WESTERBY. And you take the child?

JACK. My duty is to the child. Shall I leave him here to be brought up to regard his grandfather as his model?

LADY WESTERBY. But—

JACK. Oh believe me, I do what I must, I do what I have to do. I have work before me—that work must be done. I love Alethea; and where I love, I love deeply....but, for a long time now, she has ceased to care for me.

LADY WESTERBY. Oh, you are wrong!

JACK. Should I not know, I who have lived by her side?

LADY WESTERBY. She has seen Archie here every day—no mother could be more devoted. I've been with her for hours—all her fashionable, assumed indifference has melted away—

JACK. I have had not a line from her, not a word. Her father sent me his lawyers, to haggle for settlements. Alethea has been content.

LADY WESTERBY (*rises*). Content! Remember what happened. Oh why did you say those terrible things?

JACK. I said what was true.

LADY WESTERBY. Only God knows what is true. Sympathy, kindness and love—these things tell the truth, these alone. When we are angry, and bitter, what we say may be facts, but they cannot be true . . . See her! Appeal to her! One word from you—

JACK. My days of appeal are over.

LADY WESTERBY. And you sail to-morrow! When will you come back?

JACK. I shall never come back.

(*There is a moment's silence—then the door opens and HANKEY and ALETHEA come in. HANKEY gives a look round, nods eagerly and goes. ALETHEA is amazed at seeing JACK.*)

ALETHEA. You! (*to HANKEY*) You told me Archie was here. I—(*she turns as though to go—LADY WESTERBY springs towards her*)

LADY WESTERBY. Alethea, Alethea, stay! Mr. Frobisher, I implore you!

JACK (*pause*). Will you come with me, Alethea?

ALETHEA (*c. coldly. To audience*) No, I will not.

JACK. Your father is not here now, to distort the truth and poison your mind against me. I go to Queensland, because the life we have led became impossible for us both. Your place is with me. (*LADY WESTERBY up stage.*)

ALETHEA. No. After what you said—the way you have treated me—never!

LADY WESTERBY. (*at back of settee; pleading*) Alethea!

JACK. For three years you behaved rather badly to me—for a quarter of an hour I was . . . somewhat violent. If the words I spoke have raised a barrier between us—

ALETHEA. They have, they have! I hate you!

LADY WESTERBY. (*wringing her hands*) Alethea!

JACK. Very well, then—so be it. On one point at least I am glad to find I was wrong—as regards Archie.

ALETHEA. And yet you take him from me. Oh, that is like you! You thought that because of my child I would go to Australia with you. I will not. But I tell you this—it is a vile and wicked thing to take my boy from me!

JACK. Why?

ALETHEA. Because—because—I want him! (*she bursts into passionate tears, and sinks into a chair. There is a moment's silence*)

JACK. If I leave him with you, will you be a good mother to him?

ALETHEA. (*brokenly*) Yes, oh yes!

JACK. Very well, then, he shall stay here. I go to Queensland alone.

(ALETHEA bows her head, but says nothing.)

JACK. Remember that he is my son; and try, in the time to come, to think more kindly of his father. And out there, in Queensland, I shall be waiting . . . for you both. . . Good-bye. (*he turns to go. ALETHEA rushes towards him*)

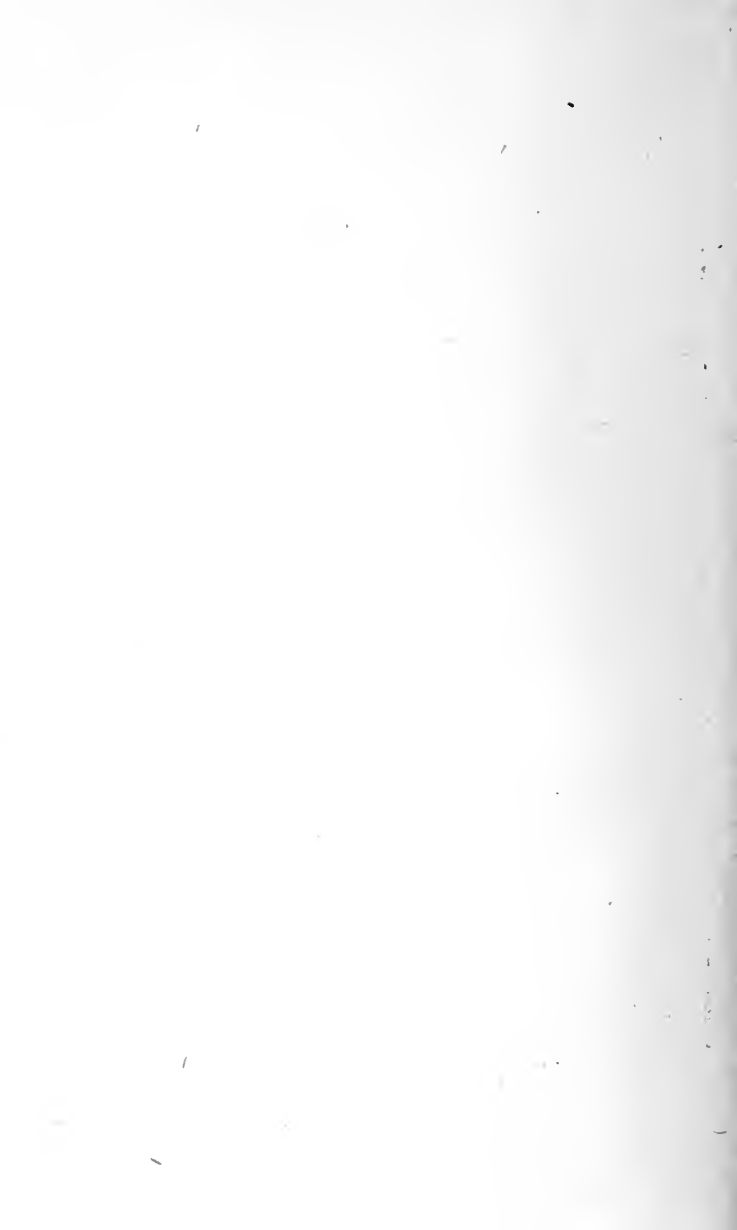
ALETHEA. No, no, I will go with you, Jack—I will go with you! And oh—I will try!

JACK. Ally! (*he takes her in his arms; the MARQUIS bursts impetuously into the room, followed by HANKEY, who in vain tries to restrain him*)

MARQUIS. (*frantically*) Alethea! (*he turns fiercely on LADY WESTERBY*) We have to thank *you* for this, my lady! (*ALETHEA, locked in JACK'S arms, does not even hear him*)

LADY WESTERBY. No, Lord Steventon—let us thank God!

CURTAIN.



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